

MACH 2

Concorde magazine



End of an era

*Commemorating the 15th
anniversary of Concorde's
last flights*

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INTRODUCTION

This bumper issue focuses on a sad but significant event in aviation history – the 15th anniversary of Concorde’s last flights. We follow the journey of each aircraft to her final location, and former Concorde ground engineer Philip Cairns explains how Concorde was decommissioned. We end with personal insights about the last ever flight of a Concorde, on 26 November 2003, when G-BOAF returned to her birthplace at Filton.

Our report on the latest international gathering of “Foxy’s Filton Flyers” sees the Concorde enthusiasts return to Filton to re-connect with G-BOAF as she is now. In a weekend of camaraderie and sharing of knowledge, the group also visited Brooklands to spend a special day with G-BBDG.

We end with reviews of two new books on Concorde – a compact version of the popular Haynes Manual, and a personal tribute to Alpha Fox.

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Photo © Andrew Bromage www.jetphotos.com |
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THE FINAL FLIGHTS

After the official end of Concorde services on 24 October 2003, our great white swans had one last series of journeys, travelling to the museums that would become their final homes. In this feature we recall the very end of Concorde's flying career, and take a look back at the day of the last ever Concorde flight.

Most of the aircraft flew directly to their new homes or to the nearest convenient airport. Two underwent further stages in their journey – G-BOAD, and Air France's F-BVFB, were transported by barge (and Fox Bravo by road) to the museums where they would go on display. We retrace their journeys to their new homes and look at how they have fared since.

This time, sadly, Concorde really had reached the end of her life as a flying machine. British Airways and Air France had all of their active aircraft partially or completely decommissioned so they would no longer have the power or necessary equipment for flight. British Airways ground engineer Philip Cairns was part of the team who decommissioned BA Concorde G-BOAD at New York, and he explains what had to be done.

The end of the journey

The last Concorde ever to fly was the British G-BOAF, returning to Filton, where she was originally built. We include accounts of that day from Mach 2 Contributing Editor Nigel Ferris and from "Foxy's Filton Flyers" leader Paul Evans, both of whom were to remain involved with this aircraft as tour guides for several years afterwards, while she was displayed at Concorde at Filton.

In addition, we have a report from two very special travellers who flew on that final journey with Alpha Fox. Former Concorde cabin crew member Laurence Keniston and her husband Kevin describe how the BA Concorde team prepared for this very emotional occasion – and how their own feelings were heightened by a life-changing event!

Sundown at Heathrow

7 November 2003: G-BOAD, G-BOAE, and G-BOAF, the last active Concorde remaining at Heathrow, await their final flights.

Photo: Baz Glenister



The beginning of the end

Air France retired their fleet during June 2003. Following the end of their passenger services, the four active aircraft were flown to museums. The fifth Concorde, F-BVFF, remains on static display at Paris–Charles de Gaulle.

F-BVFA: 12/06/03

Fox-Alpha left Paris CDG and flew to Dulles Airport, Washington, DC. The flight, carrying VIP passengers, took just under 3 hours 43 minutes. F-BVFA would go on display at the Steven F. Udvar-Hazy centre, Smithsonian Museum.

F-BTSD: 14/06/03

Sierra Delta made a supersonic flight from CDG around the Bay of Biscay, carrying VIP passengers. Once the passengers had disembarked, the aircraft made his last short flight to Le Bourget, on the first day of the Paris Air Show, performing a low-level fly-past over the air show before landing and saluting the spectators. The aircraft was parked on the airfield for the rest of the show, before being moved into the Concorde Hall at the Musée de l'Air et de l'Espace.

F-BVFB: 24/06/03

Fox-Bravo had been donated to Germany in memory of the German passengers who died in the Concorde crash of 25 July 2000. In a complex journey, the aircraft first flew out of CDG and performed a supersonic flight over the Bay of Biscay before landing at Karlsruhe-Baden-Baden in Germany. He was then partially dismantled and taken by barge and road to the Auto und Technik Museum, Sinsheim, where in March 2004 he was mounted on the museum roof with the Soviet Tu-144 supersonic airliner.

F-BVFC: 27/06/03

Fox Charlie made the last ever Air France Concorde flight. Carrying VIP passengers including André Turcat, the original test pilot for Concorde, the aircraft left CDG and



made a last supersonic loop over the Bay of Biscay on his way to Toulouse, birthplace of the French fleet. Commander Henri-Gilles Fournier performed a fly-past over the airport before landing and taxiing in a circuit to display the aircraft to the spectators. In 2009 Fox Charlie was displayed outside the old airport building during the celebrations for

A place in history

Concorde F-BVFC on display at Toulouse-Blagnac, 1 March 2009, as part of the celebrations for the 40th anniversary of Concorde's first flight.

Photo: Katie John

the 40th anniversary of Concorde's first flight. He has since been repainted and is on display outside the museum building at Aeroscopia.

Non-flying Air France airframes

The remaining three members of the Air France Concorde fleet had already reached the end of their lives.

F-BVFF last flew on 11 June 2000, after which he was grounded for planned maintenance. When the retirement was announced he was undergoing a D check, but this work was halted. The aircraft underwent cosmetic restoration; after the fleet retirement he remained at Charles de Gaulle airport. He has been mounted on stilts so air travellers can see him as they land and take off.

F-BTSC was tragically destroyed together with all passengers and crew, and four people on the ground, in the crash at Gonesse on 25 July 2000.

F-BVFD was damaged in 1977 due to a heavy landing and was withdrawn from service in May 1982. After remaining grounded for 12 years at Charles de Gaulle, he was broken up in 1994.

Farewell to Heathrow

At the end of British Airways Concorde services there were five active aircraft in the fleet – G-BOAC, OAD, OAE, OAF, and OAG. Over the next month they all dispersed to their new homes. Finally, on 26 November, Alpha Fox flew out of Heathrow to her final resting place – Filton, the birthplace of the British Concorde fleet.

G-BOAC: 31/10/2003

Captains: Mike Bannister, Paul Douglas
Senior Engineer Officers: Robert Woodcock, Trevor Norcott

At about 10:25 G-BOAC took off from Heathrow for the last time, with 82 British Airways Concorde staff on board as passengers. Flying subsonically, she took about 25 minutes to arrive and land at Manchester. Alpha Charlie was displayed on a taxiway that weekend, then moved into a hangar for decommissioning. In April 2004 she was put on display for visitors outside at the Runway Viewing Park. Finally, on 12 January 2009, G-BOAC was moved into a purpose-built hangar, which was officially opened on 26 February.



First to leave
 G-BOAC takes off for a last sub-sonic hop to Manchester.
Photo: Jetinder Sira

G-BOAG: 03/11/2003 – 05/11/2003

Captains: Mike Bannister, Les Brodie
Senior Engineer Officers: Robert Woodcock, Trevor Norcott

On 3 November 2003 Alpha Golf was the next Concorde to leave Heathrow, taking off at 15:30. She crossed the Atlantic to arrive at JFK at 14:00.

The aircraft stayed at JFK for a day, then at 13:35 on 5 November she left for the Boeing Field, Seattle. Uniquely, Alpha Golf had been given special clearance to fly supersonically over uninhabited parts of northern Canada – so she covered the 3,875 km (2,408 miles) in just 3 hours 55 minutes 12 seconds. She arrived early at the Boeing Field and performed a low-level fly-past over crowds of spectators before touching down.

On 7 November G-BOAG was decommissioned. For the next 13 years she was displayed outside at the Boeing Field aircraft park, then in 2016 she was moved under cover in the museum's new Aviation Pavilion.

One last endeavour

G-BOAG departs on the first stage of her epic flight from London to New York and then supersonically to Seattle.

Photo: Jetinder Sira



G-BOAD: 10/11/2003 – 25/11/2003

Captains: Mike Bannister, Paul Douglas
Senior Engineer Officers: Trevor Norcott, Warren Hazelby

On 10 November at 15:37, G-BOAD left Heathrow for the last time to cross the Atlantic to her new home in New York. She made the crossing in 3 hours 8 minutes. Over the next two weeks, she was kept in a hangar at JFK while she was decommissioned (see following article). Then, on 24 November, she was lifted by crane on to a barge and transported on a 2-day journey from the airport past the Statue of Liberty and up the Hudson River to the USS *Intrepid* aircraft carrier. She went on display at this museum in early 2004.

In December 2006 Alpha Delta was moved to Floyd Bennett Airfield in Brooklyn while the museum underwent renovation. Unfortunately, in July 2008 the aircraft suffered an accident while at the airfield, when a truck crashed into the nose cone and knocked it off. A replica nose was fitted, and in October of that year Alpha Delta



was taken back to the USS *Intrepid* at Manhattan. She remains here to this day, standing on a pier beside the *Intrepid*.

G-BOAE: 17/11/2003

Captains: Mike Bannister,
Les Brodie
Senior Engineer Officers:
Robert Woodcock, Warren
Hazelby

Just after 12:30 on 17 November, Alpha Echo left Heathrow for Grantley Adams International Airport, Barbados. Carrying 70 members of BA's Concorde staff and families, she made the last ever crossing of the Atlantic by a Concorde, taking less than 4 hours to reach Barbados. She was received by a crowd of spectators together with the Royal Barbados Police Band, and was officially welcomed by Noel Lynch, Minister for Tourism and International Transport for Barbados.

By air and sea

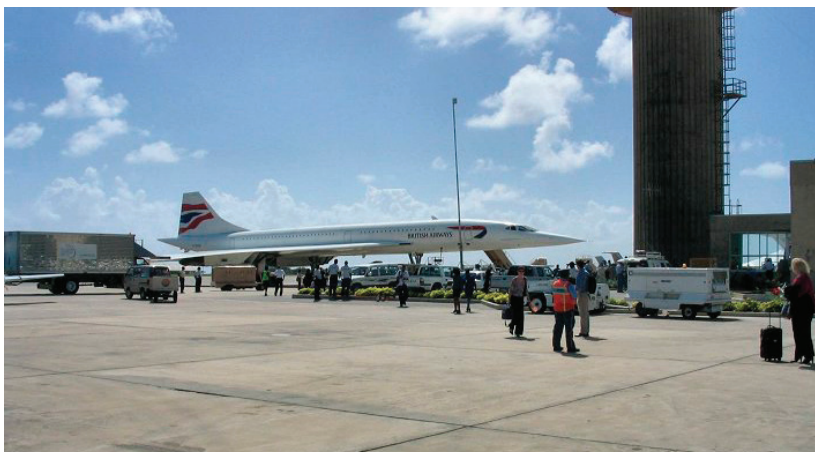
The decommissioned G-BOAD makes her stately progress by barge past the Statue of Liberty. Her two-day river journey took her from JFK across Jamaica Bay, then under the Verrazano Narrows Bridge and finally to the USS *Intrepid*.
Photo: U.S. Navy

For the first three years Alpha Echo was housed in a steel-framed temporary hangar while the museum hangar was being built; in 2004 Barbados was swept by a hurricane, which wrecked the hangar while leaving Echo unscathed! Finally, on 30 March 2007, she was moved into her permanent home at the Barbados Concorde Experience.

A video of her arrival can be seen on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=39&v=ttIM_YUibS8

New life in Barbados

17 November 2003: G-BOAE stands on the tarmac at Grantley Adams International Airport just after her warm reception in Barbados.
Photo © Trevor Evans



G-BOAF: 26/11/2003

Captains: Les Brodie, Paul Douglas, Mike Bannister
Senior Engineer Officers:
 Warren Hazelby, Trevor Norcott

At 11:30 Alpha Fox took off from Heathrow for the last ever Concorde flight. Carrying 100 passengers, including VIPs and airline staff, she performed a final supersonic circuit over the Bay of Biscay before overflying the Clifton Suspension Bridge and coming in to Filton. She arrived at approximately 13:05. As her wheels touched down, she brought to an end the glorious 27-year adventure that was supersonic air travel.

The aircraft was closed up for the winter, and then in March 2004 she was towed to a display area south of the runway. On 18 August 2004 she was opened to the public as the centrepiece of the Concorde at Filton exhibition. She remained on display there until October 2010.

Alpha Fox then remained closed for several years, during which time Airbus carried out a programme of maintenance and repair work. Finally, in February 2017, she was moved into a new hangar, and on 1 December she was once again put on display to the public as part of the new Aerospace Bristol aviation heritage centre.

Further information

Full details of all these ferry flights can be found on Jetinder Sira's web pages for each of the aircraft. These pages are a real treasure; as well as Jetinder's own accounts, they include photos, video, maps of flight paths, and excerpts of radio messages between the aircraft and air traffic control. The pages are available here: <http://www.concorde35mm.co.uk/page5.html>



Farewell and God speed

G-BOAF is escorted to the runway by a collection of airport vehicles flying the Union Jack and the flags of England, Scotland, and Wales.

Photo: Jetinder Sira

Non-flying British Airways airframes

The other two fleet members – Concorde G-BOAA and G-BOAB – had been grounded after the Paris crash in July 2000, and had not flown again.

G-BOAB (Alpha Bravo) was to have received the upgrades to the fuel tanks and tyres, as well as being re-fitted with the new cabin layout, but the retirement was announced before this work could be completed. On 21



G-BOAB, 27 May 2005

Alpha Bravo has remained on display at various sites around Heathrow, such as here on a taxiway. *Photo: Richard Smith / Wikimedia Commons (CC BY 2.0)*

January 2004 she was handed over to Heathrow Airport, and she remains there to this day. Over the years she has been moved to different sites around the airport; she is now parked beside the runway so travellers can see her as they land and take off.

G-BOAA (Alpha Alpha) was kept in a hangar and was used for spares; she was out of hours and could not fly again. In spring 2004 she was partially dismantled, with the nose and tail removed and the wings cut off, then transported by road, river, and sea to her new resting place at the Museum of Flight in Scotland.

Decommissioning Concorde

As each Concorde landed for the last time, the ground engineers had the sad task of decommissioning the aircraft – removing the fuel, engines, and other parts that made her flyable. Here, former BA engineer Philip Cairns recalls what he had to do to bring G-BOAD's active life to an end.

IN EARLY NOVEMBER 2003 I was told that I would be helping to decommission Concorde G-BOAD in New York.

This was ironic as this Concorde was my favourite aircraft; it was sad enough that Concorde was going out of service, but to actually prepare this magnificent aircraft for life in a museum was not a good feeling. However, the planning had taken place and the USS *Intrepid* museum were going to have this British Airways flagship as one of their main attractions next to the *Intrepid* aircraft carrier.

Last flight with G-BOAD

On November 10th my wife Diane and I travelled to Heathrow and met Bob and Jenny Hodgkinson, and Ugo and Sharon Fini, to fly on Concorde G-BOAD to New York. Bob, Ugo, and I were to be the decommissioning crew that would assist our American colleagues to take this Concorde out of service.

The flight was amazing; the aircraft had 100 passengers, who it seemed were going to really soak up the atmosphere of Concorde's last ever flight into JFK. We were served a lovely lunch with a glass of champagne and took photos of ourselves with the Mach meter showing we were at twice the speed of sound. We managed to visit the flight deck and had our supersonic certificates signed by Mike Bannister, Paul Douglas, and Trevor Norcott.

When we arrived at JFK our wives went off to our hotel and we

Stripped of power

G-BOAD minus her engines. It took two days to remove all four engines. Photo: Carlos Borda (www.instagram.com/carlos.borda/)



Mixed emotions

Philip Cairns and his wife Diane visit the flight deck during their journey to JFK with G-BOAD. Despite the sadness of the occasion, the flight was "amazing", as Philip recalls.

Photo: Philip Cairns

for the night, after a most memorable and eventful day.

stayed with OAD to help the American engineers take the Concorde to the hangar where we would do all the necessary work. It's worth pointing out that the BA Americans had the license and ability to taxi Concorde, so now they would do so once more. With Bob, Ugo, and myself watching on the flight deck, three of our American friends started up the engines for the last time, and off we went to the hangar. The engines were shut down in a ceremonial, unforgettable way, which had us all looking for our hankies. An aircraft tug had followed us to the hangar and we housed OAD and left her

A sad task

The next day saw us leave early for JFK with the *Intrepid* representative, who picked us up in his own car. Arriving at the hangar where we had left OAD, we started by helping our American colleagues to defuel the aircraft into a fuel tanker. The American trade unions stated that all the work had to be done by their members and we would only be there in an advisory capacity, but we couldn't leave our friends struggling, so we helped with the work wherever we were needed.

Engine doors were all opened and jacked up; all four engines had





Lessening the load

The engines, each weighing 3.5 tonnes, had to be removed to make the aircraft lighter and easier to lift on to the barge. *Photo: Carlos Borda (www.instagram.com/carlos.borda)*

to be removed. We made a start, stick draining the fuel tanks and draining the hydraulics and preparing for the engine removals.

Over the course of the next five days, all the engines were removed to make the aircraft lighter, the panels above the main landing gear legs were taken off, and various hydraulic components and pipes from the same area were removed for access. This was to allow crane slings to be fitted to lift the Concorde onto the barge that would take her down the river, from where she would be lifted onto the quayside next to the *Intrepid*. We tried to keep aircraft power on OAD for as long as we would need it, as we were working to a British Airways Airform sheet, which instructed us to carry out the specified work in the correct order.

Time for reflection

The hangar we were working in had a curved roof with a staircase going right across under the roof. At the end of each day I would go up this staircase and look down on OAD. I'd spend a few moments thinking about the many times this aircraft had taken off with full loads to wonderful destinations all round the world; the other things that came to mind were wheel changes, engine changes done in the quickest time possible to get a service away, plus many other recollections that came to me in that private moment. I have to admit that my eyes would go very moist as the presence of the aircraft and my memories came together. I became very aware of what this aircraft meant to me and looking back through the years, all the way to the first flight from Filton, it had been a huge part of my life and I realised how fortunate I had been.

During the few days we were in New York, Bob Hodgkinson, who was our boss, thought it would be good if each of us could have a day in the city with our wives. I had a wonderful day off with Diane, who thought it would be good if we could go together and

visit St. Paul's church and the Ground Zero site. St. Paul's Church was right next to the disaster area and had played a major role in helping the rescue services and many injured people. We also took the ferry to Staten Island and had a good view of Manhattan.

On our last day, we set off all the escape slides on OAD and wrote a report for the manufacturers as to how they had worked. I actually slid down one of them just for the experience. I have to admit it was good, as the slide had the effect of making you stand when you reached the bottom. On this last day we left our dear Concorde in the hangar; she was all prepared to go on the barge in the next few weeks.

As Concorde is now in so many museums and not forgotten it is a measurement of her lasting quality as an icon among airliners. I would have loved to see her continue in service for at least another five years – although 27 years of airline service is terrific, and credit must go to the operators British Airways and Air France.

The full story of Concorde G-BOAD's decommissioning can be seen on the film *Concorde Alpha-Delta: An Intrepid Journey*. The region 1 DVD is available from the USA (viewers in the UK and other countries will need a multi-region DVD player):

<https://www.amazon.com/Concorde-Alpha-Delta-Intrepid-Journey-History/dp/B000AABL8K>

The decommissioning process

This list shows the aircraft parts that were removed on decommissioning G-BOAD, plus other actions carried out for safety.

- 4 engines removed (to reduce the aircraft weight); supposed to be refitted after move.
- A/c defuelled and fully drained from drain points.
- Panels above main landing gear (M.L.G.) removed for access; to be refitted after move.
- Hydraulic scissor joints by the M.L.G. removed for access; to be refitted after move.
- All fire extinguishers removed; this included the four engine extinguishers.
- All domestic water drained.
- Toilets all drained and cleaned.
- All survival packs removed.
- Fuel vent detector removed from base of fin.
- Ground Power Protection Unit moved.
- Tyre pressures adjusted down.
- Oxygen discharged.

POETRY IN MOTION

The very last Concorde flight, by G-BOAF, was a uniquely poignant occasion for all involved. It was particularly unforgettable for passenger Kevin Keniston and cabin crew member Laurence – who accepted his proposal of marriage as Alpha Fox transported them beyond the speed of sound.

IMAGINE YOU ARE about to embark on a voyage for the last time. Imagine that that voyage is going to be the last time you will ever fly on the fastest ever passenger aircraft. Imagine that you will be working on that flight along with five other cabin crew members, two pilots, and one flight engineer.

The end ... or is it?

It's Thursday 23rd October, 2003 and with very mixed emotions, Laurence Ricoul is on her way to Cardiff on board G-BOAC with her colleagues – Chris Norris, Peter Benn, Richard Maher on the flight deck; Simon Baxendale, Ricky Pick, Chris Ayling, Jan Wittock and one other cabin crew member in the cabin.

By the end of the day, the whole crew would be in an emotional daze, eyes red from crying as the realization sets in that Concorde would be no more. Gone the Atlantic crossings in 3½ hours, gone the glamour, and especially goodbye to friends in the air and on the ground, goodbye to the regular and wonderful passengers, goodbye to New York shopping and Barbados beaches.

And that is the end of an era. Back to the hum-drum of European flying with no more supersonic excitement. Except that it isn't going to be quite like that for everyone ...

Following the end of scheduled services on 24th October, British Airways would begin the

process of positioning five out of the seven Concorde to their new homes around the world. It would come as a great surprise for the cabin crew to discover that these flights would be full of British Airways staff.

Early November, and Laurence hears from her cabin crew manager that she has been selected to operate the very last flight of Concorde, on board G-BOAF to Filton. On top of that, she is told that she can invite her partner as a passenger!

The scene is set for one of our most memorable days – a day that has changed our lives.

Journey of a lifetime

Wednesday 26 November. The day starts early. Laurence has to be at the BA Compass Centre at 08:55 for the crew briefing, and I have to be at Terminal 1 by 09:30 to check in for flight BA 9020C.

While Laurence is busy with security checks before boarding and then prepping the cabin, I am in the departure lounge dressed in suit and tie, carrying a little bag with mementos for this historic flight. I don't remember a lot about the wait at the departure gate. I do remember meeting Andy Baillie, a Concorde Captain who had the honour of flying G-BOAA on her last visit to Edinburgh.

We board and the cabin is buzzing. I am in seat 19D in the back cabin. Laurence is in the

"Why is Concorde stopping when this aircraft looks and feels brand new?"

front cabin, having been asked to help and take the position forward galley. Just time to say a quick "re-bonjour" before finding my seat. The cabin itself is spotless, the Conran-designed seats look brand new, and glancing out of the window I see gleaming white paint. I think to myself with a tinge of regret – why is Concorde stopping when this aircraft looks and feels brand new?

Crew for the flight

Captains: Les Brodie (Pilot in command), Paul Douglas (Co-pilot), Mike Bannister (acting as commentator for the flight)

Flight Engineers: Warren Hazelby, Trevor Norcott

Cabin crew: led by Jacquetta Clemence, with Crispin Lovell-Smith, Vivien Cullen, Sara Gillis, Jesus Fernandez, Laurence Ricoul



On duty

Laurence photographed while carrying out her duties as a cabin crew member – little knowing that her life is about to change forever.

Photo: Laurence Keniston

The doors are closed, and after a few minutes of welcome from Mike Bannister, we push back to start our taxi. Being the last ever flight out of Concorde means of course that our departure is not going to be anything normal. We can see people on the perimeter fences all around the airport, all wanting to say goodbye for the last time. We have a two fire engine water salute by way of a send-off, and then we head for the end of the runway.

Lining up, we see even more people in the distance waving and many no doubt in tears. As the throttles are opened, the acceleration is exhilarating, and very quickly we are airborne. Mike informs us that we will do a tour of the Bay (of Biscay), meaning that we will be supersonic for part of the flight.

As we climb, Mike is giving an account of what the aircraft is doing, and very quickly we are over the Channel and accelerating through the sound barrier. Somewhere off the west coast of France we hit Mach 2 and we can enjoy for the last time ever the sensation of flying above the weather, seeing the curvature of the earth against a dark blue sky.

Up front and down the back, the crew is busy getting the meal service ready and ensuring the champagne is chilled. We are served a light lunch and a small bottle of champagne each. (Laurence has told me that all the bars were full of champagne bottles and their mission was to give it all away as there was no return flight!)

It does not take long to finish lunch, and then the crew come through to remove our trays. I am keeping an eye on the Mach meter in the cabin all the time. By this time we have more or less completed the loop around the bay and are starting to head back north.

Precision timing

At the moment I see that we start to decelerate, I get out of my seat and go forward to the centre of the cabin where the number 2

doors are, with the toilets and wardrobes. I stick my head through into the forward cabin and try to catch Laurence's eye. She sees me, and tells the Cabin Services Director, Jacquie, that her partner wants to speak to her. She walks back to where I am and closes the curtains behind her. We are completely alone.

I take a piece of paper out of my pocket and gave it to Laurence and she starts to read the poem I wrote in the days before the flight. Now, Laurence is French and I am British, and the poem is called "The Entente Concordiale". Laurence is not quite sure what is going on until, at the last sentence: "And now I am going to ask you ..."

I take a diamond ring out of my pocket, go down on one knee and ask her to marry me!

Fortunately for me, Laurence has no hesitation in saying yes! The proposal is supersonic, as we are at around Mach 1.87 at the time I ask. And the rest of the flight is a bit of a blur.

Unbeknown to both of us, someone has guessed what was going to happen and taken photos of the two of us behind the curtains. News reaches the cockpit faster than the speed of sound, and over the PA system someone in the cockpit announces that Laurence has just been proposed to, but they don't know if she said yes!

Laurence goes back to work, and I return to my seat. However, it's not long before she comes through to the back cabin with bottles of champagne for everyone including myself. And showing the ring to all her friends.

Returning to earth

By now, we're descending and decelerating, and soon we are subsonic and flying over the south-west of England, preparing for our approach into Filton. I see the Clifton Suspension Bridge in the distance, not realising that this would be the iconic photograph of the flight that so many people have come to know. I am looking out of the window at this time thinking of our future, but also how fantastic this aircraft is. Once again I ask myself why it cannot keep flying.

Our landing at 13:07 is of course historic. The last Concorde ever to be built lands very poignantly where she was made. As we taxi

in, Les and Paul are lowering and raising the noise to salute the tens of thousands of people who have turned out to see our arrival.

We come to a stop, and then there is an eerie silence as everyone in the cabin realises what just happened. And then it's time to get off the aircraft.

Laurence, however, is more aware of what is going to happen next, as she is at Door 1. The crew is met by Rod Eddington, the CEO of British Airways, at the top of the stairs, and it is there that he is told about our engagement. So the news gets out, and the Airbus and British Airways press teams go into overdrive.

The passengers are asked to disembark. As I reach Laurence at Door 1, I hang back with her, and Rod Eddington congratulates us both. He tells us that he originally had a place on the flight, but decided to give it to his secretary as she is the one writing his paycheck!

We leave the aircraft together and at the foot of the stairs we are introduced to and congratulated by Sir Dick Evans, CEO of BAE Systems, and Tom Williams, Head of Airbus UK. I then have to part company with Laurence and go with the rest of the passengers to an enclosure whilst the formalities of the aircraft handover are conducted.

A short ceremony is held with Mike Banister handing over the Tech Log to HRH The Duke of York, who accepts it and G-BOAF on behalf of Bristol. The flight deck and the Lord Lieutenant of Bristol, Sir James Napier Tidmarsh, are present along with Rod Eddington, Sir Dick Evans, and Tom Williams.

Afterwards, and with the media baying for news about our engagement, we are asked to be part of the line-up to meet Prince Andrew. This is an amusing and memorable moment, because Prince Andrew is impressed by the fact that I have managed to pick this unique occasion to propose, and that the only way to beat it would be to hold the wedding at Balmoral! We never took him up on the offer ...

The media teams start shouting at us to give them the story. At this point the last thing we want to do is go in front of the cameras. The Airbus and BA press teams come to our rescue and move us under G-BOAF, away from the media. But then they come back to us and propose that we do one syndicated interview, to which we agree.

We then go back on the aircraft with our press officers and a journalist. We recount the flight and the engagement, and after the interview an Airbus photographer takes THE photograph, which we treasure to this day – our official engagement photograph!

Our journey back to London is a lot less glamorous. We are on a crew bus, it's pouring with rain, and I may even have had to pay £10 for the privilege. Unbelievably, the next day, Laurence goes back to work, subsonic of course, and I return to Toulouse and my Airbus colleagues. Our real celebration would be on the 29th November, when we attend a Concorde Ball at Runnymede Hotel.

To this day, Concorde has played a major part in our lives. We intend to visit and even re-visit every Concorde in the world.

Unique souvenir

Kevin and Laurence pose on board G-BOAF for their "official" engagement photograph – a unique and treasured memento of their special day.
Photo © Airbus



The homecoming

As G-BOAF overflew Filton and touched down for the last time, she was watched by thousands of people feeling a mixture of emotions – awe at her beauty and power, and sadness and disbelief that she was never to fly again. Two of those people – Paul Evans and Nigel Ferris – tell their stories here. In the following years, both men would go on to forge their own lasting connection with Alpha Foxtrot.

Paul Evans

A volunteer team leader for “Concorde at Filton” from 2004 to 2010, Paul now organises tours for Concorde enthusiasts; he has recently written a book, *The Last Concorde*, about G-BOAF.

Driving back from Heathrow on a wet November 17th 2003, having witnessed G-BOAE depart for her final flight to Barbados, I was mulling over whether to see the final Concorde flight EVER taking off from LHR or landing for the final time at the place of her birth, Filton.

I pondered over this decision for a few days and decided on witnessing the final landing at Filton. I booked my train ticket from Neath to Bristol Parkway for early on Wednesday November 26th (not realising at the time how far Parkway was from Filton!).

The future ends here

As the day began, I remember thinking that Concorde couldn't end – it was still “the future” – and imagined that there would be a miraculous announcement made today that this aircraft was going to be kept airworthy for airshows and royal occasions (obviously we now all know that this was only a pipe dream and never a reality).

Arriving into Parkway I was met with a cold drizzly day and also the prospect of a rather long walk to Filton. After what seemed like an age I was met by a crowd numbering into the thousands on the A38 at the Rolls Royce, Patchway end of the airfield. Quite unusual for me, I was very quiet as I continued to disbelieve that today really was the end of Concorde.



Suddenly there was a movement in unison throughout the crowd as above us the familiar sight and sound of Concorde G-BOAF swept over us and the Filton site in a fairly low flypast, as the aircraft headed out towards the Severn estuary, down towards Weston-super-Mare, and back over the city of Bristol, the Clifton Suspension Bridge, and finally home. I recall vividly that everyone in the crowd thought that there would definitely be a touch-and-go or several low flypasts before the inevitable final landing.

The time was now nearly 13.05. Suddenly the drizzle stopped, the sun appeared, and there was even a rainbow as in the distance G-BOAF appeared on the horizon, making

Touchdown

Crowds watch as Alpha Fox comes in to land. Many were hoping for a touch-and-go – but it was not to be. *Photo: John Phillips / geograph.org.uk (CC BY-SA 2.0)*

her final approach home. Closer and closer she approached. Did I get my camera out? No – I thought there was bound to be another approach after the touch-and-go, so I left my camera and just fixed on that beautiful silhouette in the sky. She passed overhead and glided down to the centre of Filton's very wide runway, disappearing from view, everyone stretching their necks to see the take off ... but it never happened!

G-BOAF taxied towards all of us, lowering and raising her nose, sa-

luting her adoring audience. Captain Les Brodie, Captain Paul Douglas, and SEO Warren Hazelby had brought her back home to the place she first flew from some 24 years earlier. The adventure was over.

She taxied away from the crowd to a location near the Brabazon Hangers, where she had originally been assembled. I left quickly, as I could feel myself starting to get a wee bit emotional, and I couldn't bear to hear those magnificent Olympus 593s being shut down for the final time.

A new chapter

I headed back home on the train to Neath thinking that it was all over. I could never have imagined that a year later I would be one of the privileged few to look after this aircraft at the Concorde at Filton exhibition and show people around her for the next 6 years, meeting wonderful people and making life-long friends including the crew who flew her home.

Then, when Concorde at Filton closed and our old team went our separate ways, I never imagined that once again this magnificent aircraft – which I have always acknowledged as “my girl” – would have brought about the birth of my new Concorde group “Foxie's Filton Flyers”.



Back where it all began

Alpha Fox ends the day by being towed back to the Brabazon Hangar, where she first emerged into the world 34 years previously, on 20 April 1979.

Photo: Gordon Roxburgh

In this group, the old Concorde at Filton team of Colin Smith, Andy Strange, Nigel Ferris, Judith Martyn, Rosie Thompson, Antoni Barsi, James Coombe, Ken Ricketts, Tony Mumford, Pete Whittaker, Bob White, and our honorary member Fred Finn (who visited and supported Filton from the start) would be joined by members of all the Concorde family worldwide, ex-engineers, flight crew, and staff from other Concorde museums, meeting up and visiting the rest of this fleet

of extraordinary aircraft around the world and creating lifelong friendships. Thank you Filton, and thank you “Foxie”, for bringing all of us together. I would also like everybody to acknowledge and thank Oliver Dearden, who was instrumental in the discussions with British Airways in getting Alpha Foxtrot for Filton.

Paul's book *The Last Concorde* is available from Speedbird Promotions: <https://concordegifts.co.uk/index.php>

Nigel Ferris

Following the fateful day when he saw G-BOAF come home, Nigel spent six years as a volunteer guide for Concorde at Filton. He is now Contributing Editor for Mach 2 magazine and runs the TCAS-Concorde web site.

Wednesday 26th November, 2003. Just a date – but for me it marks a very emotional time. One of the technological wonders of this world was to be retired. This was a sad day for aviation, technology, progress, and Concorde aficionados around the world. It was to be the last ever landing of any Concorde, as G-BOAF (Alpha Foxtrot, Foxie) came home to where she was born. The last Concorde to be built, her first

flight was on 20 April 1979. She was also the last complete aircraft to be built and flown from Filton.

I had witnessed the very first flight of the British prototype, 002, and nearly 50 years later saw the very last flight of any Concorde in the world. A stunning 27 years of service were to end that day – no more would we see that beautiful shape in the sky, or hear her magnificent Rolls Royce Olympus 593/610

engines roaring. She was an icon of the 20th and 21st centuries, a marvel that has not been, and never will be, surpassed. To transport 100 passengers in luxury, 11 miles high, one mile every 1¾ seconds, with occasional views of the curvature of the Earth, at speeds more likely to be reached by fighter pilots – but even then only for a short duration, as opposed to Concorde's 2 plus hours at Mach 2.

Anticipation

Early on that day, I trooped out to Filton, along with thousands of other people, to get a good vantage point to witness this event. (Parking was a problem in the local streets – I had to walk quite some distance after I found a place.) As it turned out, I was able to stand on a slightly elevated grass bank, on the A38 passing Filton into Bristol, which afforded a good view of the runway.

There was an excited buzz amongst everybody there, in anticipation. Complete strangers were talking to each other, sharing their own stories, and becoming immersed in a general feeling of awe, sadness, and joy at the magical sight we were about to see. The people of Bristol, Somerset, and Gloucestershire turned out in huge numbers along the route (a radar circuit) to get a glimpse and pay homage.

The day was grey and raining, not a good portent for the spectacle to come. However, the appointed time drew close, and she came into view from the East, that familiar shape getting bigger in the sky. The flight plan was for a clean fly-past at 2000 feet – but Captain Les Brodie, who was the handling pilot for the landing, elected to do it at 1500 feet. (He was to retire from BA on that day; after the flight he was asked about the lower fly-past and said, “What could they do – sack me?”).

She banked left over Bristol, the side slip clearly visible, and continued towards Avonmouth before turning left past Portishead and Weston-Super-Mare and down the Bristol Channel.

Turning inland over Burnham, she passed over Long Ashton, then over another of Bristol’s finest achievements, Brunel’s Clifton Suspension Bridge, overflying Bristol and Southmead Hospital (the birth-

Touchdown

G-BOAF glides in to land; the vortices curl over the wings, and the powerful brakes come on, one last time.

Photos: Gordon Roxburgh

place of the flight engineer on that flight, Warren Hazelby).

She then continued east before turning towards Filton to begin the approach and on to finals. Almost magically, the rain stopped, the clouds moved away, and there was clear blue sky that seemed to be

exclusively over Filton. At that moment, we were also treated to a wonderful display by the blue Rolls-Royce-owned Spitfire – the unique sound of her Griffon engine as unmistakable in its way as the roar of Concorde’s engines. As Concorde came into view, on the approach,



the Spitfire departed to her holding point while Concorde continued onto finals. (How we all wished she would do a low, clean, fast fly-over before climbing up on full reheat.)

The end – and beyond

Swooping low over the A38, and us, Captain Brodie bought G-BOAF in to a perfect landing. We heard the shriek of the compressed air rams operating the reverse thrust buckets. As she decelerated the Spitfire returned, flying over Concorde in salute, then climbing away and doing a victory roll off the top. Really quite a poignant moment – a 60+ year old Aircraft saluting a 34 year old aircraft that had 10–15 years (maybe more) of flying life left in her.

Alpha Fox carried on to the end of the runway, then turned and slowly made her way back to us. There were many crowds gathered at vantage points outside the perimeter, and at each group, she turned to face the people and drooped her nose in salute. As we watched, she came down to the turning circle, faced the crowd outside the RR/Post Office area, drooped the nose,

turned to face us on the road, and did the same. At each stopping point, the Captain and First Officer hung out of the DV windows, waving Union Jack flags – and Pudsey Bear! Then to the taxiway on the south side of the runway, parking brake set, chocked, ground power attached. I am not sure who had the task to shut down the magnificent 593s – the Captain, First Officer, or the Flight Engineer. Whoever did it must have felt immense sadness to be responsible for making it so we would never hear them again.

The steps were rolled up, the passengers disembarked, the dignitaries did their bit, which was of little interest to the world, and the flight log was handed over by Captain Mike Bannister to Prince Andrew. Eventually, the aircraft was towed into the Brabazon Hangar, to begin the process of draining her life blood and equipment that would ensure she could not fly again.

She remained there until a purpose-built compound was set up for her to be displayed as part of The Bristol Aero Collection – Concorde At Filton (2004-2010). I was a

proud tour guide during that period, showing many thousands of visitors around our 'Bird'. Then from 2010 until 2017, she sat alone in her compound, unvisited, dirty, and faded by the weather (although she did receive some maintenance, particularly weather-proofing). Now she is shut inside a new building as the main attraction for Aerospace Bristol. She has a special place in the hearts of people in and around Bristol.

I, like probably millions of others, lamented that day – with sadness and pride. Pride for me, as I was a small part of the project during its design and development. We had been witnesses to the end of an era when British and French technology, design, and performance was second to none in the world of aviation. The effect, the sound, the vision of the designers and builders, and the incomparable overall impression will never be repeated.

Going out in style

Union Jacks flying and nose dipped, G-BOAF and her crew (and Pudsey Bear) pause to salute the spectators who have come to admire her. *Photo © Andrew Bromage www.jetphotos.com*



An international gathering

The weekend of 13–14 October saw the second international gathering of Concorde enthusiasts' groups this year, after the weekend in Toulouse in April (see Mach 2, June 2018). This time, the British enthusiasts played host.

The weekend took place at Brooklands, home of Concorde G-BBDG – the first Concorde ever to carry passengers – and Aerospace Bristol, which houses G-BOAF, the last Concorde ever to fly.

This two-day gathering was organised by Paul Evans, leader of the Facebook group “Foxy’s Filton Flyers”, and James Coombe, former volunteer at Concorde at Filton. It brought together members of Concorde groups from the UK and France, as well as from further afield (such as Canada and Sweden). Among the group were volunteers and former volunteers from the various Concorde museums, as well as former Concorde engineers and cabin crew, and – most notably – an Air France Concorde pilot, Captain Jacky Ramon. Another notable attendee was Fred Finn, holder of the Guinness World Record for the most air miles ever flown by anyone, including 718 flights in Concorde.

Meeting at Brooklands

Our weekend started at Brooklands Museum, with a breakfast of champagne, coffee, and pastries in the Vickers Suite. A welcoming group from the museum gave a short talk about their roles and the history Brooklands. John Carter (team leader for the volunteers at Brooklands) told us that a lot of the design work for Concorde had been done at this site, and 30% of each airframe (French as well as British) had been made there. John also told us that G-BBDG had been the first Concorde ever to carry 100 passengers at the speed of sound.

Next, we were given special access to the Concorde simulator, which was fully operational. Our



Good omen

This amazing weekend started with a rainbow arching over G-BBDG (Delta Golf) that morning, as she stood ready for us to board at Brooklands Museum.

Photo: Katie John

French visitors said that the Toulouse simulator was not yet active, so this sim was currently the only one working. Captain Jacky Ramon took a turn at the controls to carry out a landing – as did Louis Paulus, head of the group Cap Avenir Concorde, with Captain Ramon’s help.

On board Delta Golf

Our tour of G-BBDG began with a treat – Captain Ramon and Louis Paulus lowered the nose! Paul Evans and James Cullingham (leader of the team who look after Delta Golf) had secretly planned this event. It was a real coup, as DG does not have her nose moved regularly.

On board, former Concorde cabin crew member Carol Cornwell gave us carnations and champagne. We toasted the aircraft – “To Concorde!” and “À l’Entente Concorde!” John Carter gave a short talk on Delta Golf. We watched a video about DG, with BA Concorde cap-

tain Mike Bannister talking viewers through a take-off. Then Mike himself came out to talk to us, before going to the flight deck, where he would give us individual tours.

As we awaited our visits to the flight deck, Carol, with stewardesses Jeannette Hartley and Laurence Keniston, entertained us with stories about life on Concorde. As Carol said, “This aircraft has given so much pleasure to so many people.”

Jacky Ramon thanked the British group leaders for the day and expressed admiration for what the volunteers had done at Brooklands.

Captain’s talk

After a hot buffet lunch, Mike Bannister gave a talk. He began by outlining his own career, starting with seeing Concorde on TV in 1969, and touching on his career at BOAC and then BA, ending with his position as Chief Concorde Pilot for British Airways until 2003.

Mike described the role of Brooklands in the development of supersonic flight, starting with Barnes Wallis's work in the 1950s. He took us through the history of Concorde's development and entry into commercial service – from the oil crisis of 1973, which killed the airlines' interest in Concorde, to the triumph of BA's supersonic services from the late 1980s to 2003 – when BA's seven Concorde's could make more than 35% of the airline's overall profits, bringing in a total of over £0.5 billion profit for BA. He ended on a more sombre note, with an account of the 2000 crash and Concorde's retirement.

Mike mentioned some unique events in Concorde's service life – such as the RAF's use of Concorde flights for intercept practice (when Concorde would pretend to be a Soviet bomber!) and the flight of two BA Concorde's to follow the solar eclipse of August 1999. He showed spectacular video footage taken from G-BOAD's cockpit during the fly-past for the Queen's Golden Jubilee in 2002, with the Red Arrows visible from Concorde's windows. He followed with a video of G-BOAF's final flight, again taken on the flight deck, with voice-overs from cabin crew and spectators. Many of those present found this video very moving – especially those who had also been on that flight.

Lastly, Mike invited Fred Finn to say a few words. He mentioned Fred's record of 718 flights on Concorde. Fred thanked Brooklands for the day, and thanked Paul Evans for organising this trip and the other group events he has put together. He recounted some of his experiences as a passenger, and paid tribute to the work done by Louis Paulus and Cap Avenir Concorde at the Espace Concorde in Toulouse.

The day ended with a relaxed evening at the Hand and Spear in Weybridge, arranged by Fred.

There are many people to thank for our day at Brooklands, but a

few stand out in particular. Paul Evans once again did a fantastic job of masterminding the events. Michelina Caliendo-Sear, Concorde operations manager at Brooklands, planned a fascinating day for us and made us feel like VIPs with the sumptuous breakfast and lunch. She is a pilot herself, and her enthusiasm for DG and welcome for us were lovely. Captain Mike Bannister was a fund of fascinating stories about Concorde, and took the time to speak to each of us personally on DG's flight deck. James Cullingham came to Brooklands specially to organise the nose move. James Coombe, who works at the Novotel on the Bath Road by Heathrow Airport, arranged transport for us from Weybridge, and took excellent care of those of us who stayed there that night, even leaving personal welcome notes for us in our rooms.

Heading west: Filton

The next day also started with a treat for a few of us. James Coombes took us up to the top floor of the Novotel, where we had a fantastic view of the runways at Heathrow. As well as seeing several take-offs and landings, we had a glimpse of Concorde G-BOAB's tail in the distance.

At Filton, Iain Gray (former head of Airbus UK and now a trustee of Aerospace Bristol) and Lloyd Burnell (Director of the museum) met us in the entrance of the new museum building. Iain gave a short introductory speech in which he thanked Foxie's Filton Flyers for their support.

While we were waiting to go round the museum, Jacky Ramon showed me some items he had brought with him, which he used to use during flights. These were: a copy of the Air France pilots' check-

Tools of the job

Concorde captain Jacky Ramon shows the slide rule and visual guide that the Air France crews used to help with calculations during flights.

Photo: Katie John

list for each stage of flight; a Perspex template that the French pilots used as a visual guide for calculating fuel consumption given different wind directions; and a slide rule to calculate optimum fuel consumption at different altitudes, showing the flight level, number of engines working, weight of aircraft, and air temperature.

Museum tour

Oliver said a few words to introduce himself. He had started at Filton in 1954, working on the Britannia, and had been involved with projects including the Bristol 198 and the work on supersonic aircraft that paved the way for Concorde.

He and his colleagues gave us an extensive history of the Filton site – from the start of aircraft manufacture in 1910, through Filton's major contributions in both World Wars, and the growth of the engine manufacturing division, up to the latest airliners and spacecraft.

Oliver was able to give us insights about the various aircraft. Regarding the Brabazon, for example, Oliver said that there was more to show, in addition to the set of tyres that were already on display. He said the Brabazon had included innovations such as air conditioning and powered flight controls, but it had reached the market just too late. He



said the runway at Filton had had to be extended to take the Brabazon; this extension later made it possible to fly the Britannia and then Concorde at the site. He showed us Bristol's pioneering helicopters – the Sycamore, built in 1947, and the 173, the world's first twin-rotor helicopter. Oliver described the 173 prototype's first flight, in which it could only fly backwards!

Like Brooklands, the museum had displays showing different parts of the aircraft factory, such as a clocking-in machine, the workshop – making propellers, doping skin – and the Drawing and Tech office. There was a display of equipment for making aero engines, which included some state-of-the-art items such as a machine to check the timing of sparks in engines. There were fun things for children to try, such as riveting bits of metal and using a light box to trace aeroplane designs. The displays and exhibits really came to life with Oliver and Terry Ransome to explain them to us. As one example, while we were looking at the display of the fan from a Rolls-Royce Trent 1000 engine (the Rolls-Royce aero engine plant is close to the BAC site), Oliver told us that the fan blades are loose when the engine is still; on aeroplanes standing outside, you can hear the blades clanking as the wind turns them.

Concorde G-BOAF

After lunch in the museum café, we moved on to the highlight of our day – Alpha Fox. For some of our party, this was the first time they had seen the aircraft since 26 November 2003, when she touched down at Filton for the last time.

I was used to seeing Foxie outdoors, so it was a surprise to see her in this fairly dark environment. I guessed that the lighting level enabled the museum to show their films on the aircraft's side. The film on the fuselage was pretty general in subject matter, and I felt that a film like that could just as easily be shown on a



separate screen. What did impress me, though, was the film projected on the side of the engine bay, showing air flow, heating, and pressure as the air passed through the engine at every speed. One of our group said she had videoed the engine bay film the last time she was here, and had shown it to a friend to explain how the engines worked. I thought it would be ideal if the museum could have further “how it works” films projected over the wing, to show the air flow, and on the nose, to demonstrate the droop snoot mechanism. (I put these and other ideas to Iain Gray, who kindly invited me to submit my thoughts to him.)

On the upper level of the hangar, beside Alpha Fox, there is an exhibition room. Tony Mumford kindly showed me round. The highlight here is the original training flight deck mock-up, complete with working lights. The museum is planning to get this mock-up operational. There are also large models of the flight instruments, also for crew training, with touch screens showing how each one worked.

Once again, the fascinating displays were further enhanced by the personal insights from the pilots, engineers, and other former Concorde personnel who were with us. They were the ones who explained details that might not normally come to light. Doug Newton told us that each air intake on Concorde takes in

Foxie's Filton Flyers

The group poses for a photo in front of Alpha Fox – the “Flyer” who has been the inspiration for Paul Evans and, through him, for the rest of us.

Photo: James Cullingham

air at a slightly different speed. Peter Ugle pointed out the diagram on the landing gear, to show the recommended extension of the landing gear at different internal pressures. He also explained to a young visitor how the buckets worked. A couple of French visitors were delighted to meet Jacky Ramon, who gave them a personal talk about Concorde.

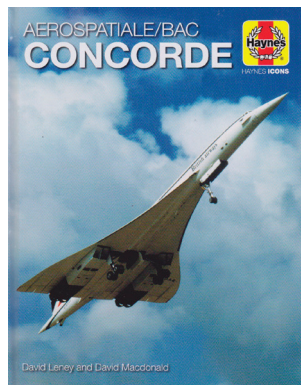
Even after we left the museum, our Concorde experience continued. We had dinner in the Air Balloon pub next to the airfield. Philip Cairns and his wife were there, and Philip showed us a folder of photos and documents from the whole of his life with Concorde, from 1970 to 2003. I found it very moving to see this personal slice of history.

Being with Alpha Fox was an emotional experience for everyone. The chance to touch and explore the aircraft again had a powerful effect on some members of our party. Even now, Concorde is still exerting her magic, drawing together enthusiasts from across the world, so the story of Concorde can carry on and be passed to a new generation. May the young people of today enjoy the wonder and inspiration that was ours with Concorde.

Book reviews: Perceptions of an icon

Katie John takes a look at two new books about Concorde. First is the Haynes Icon on Concorde – a compact, updated form of the already popular Haynes Manual. We end with *The Last Concorde*, by Paul Evans – a personal tribute to G-BOAF.

Haynes Icons: Aerospatiale/BAC Concorde



David Leney, David Macdonald

Haynes Publishing 2018
978-1-78521-576-6
£12.99

<https://haynes.com/en-gb/haynes-icons-concorde>

Haynes Publishing is familiar to British readers for their series of maintenance manuals for cars and motorbikes. In recent years they have expanded the concept to give a view “under the bonnet” of more exotic types of transport, from tractors and tanks to ships and aircraft.

It was inevitable, then, that Haynes would produce a book on Concorde – perhaps the world’s best-known and most popular airliner. This compact version includes all the information given in the classic Haynes manual, with some updated text and illustrations.

The manual touches on the history of Concorde’s development and entry into service, but the meat of the book is in the technical detail. Each aspect of the aircraft’s structure and systems is considered – not just in terms of how it

works but also how it came to be made that way. Information is imparted in a friendly style, as if the authors are sitting beside the reader and explaining aspects of the aircraft as they come up in conversation. Yet the understanding is based on hard facts gleaned from years of hands-on experience in operating Concorde. Far from being a dry textbook, this is a tour through the contents of two supremely well-equipped minds.

Although this book might not equip the average reader with the know-how to take a spanner to Concorde themselves (unless they belong to Heritage Concorde, or the teams from Brooklands or Musée Delta), it is an enlightening look behind the flight controls, inside the engine bays, and under the skin of this extraordinary aircraft.

The Last Concorde



Paul J. Evans

Speedbird Promotions 2018
ISBN 978-1-78926-344-2
£15.00

<https://www.concordegifts.co.uk>

They say a picture paints a thousand words. In this extended photo essay, Paul Evans reveals his connection with Concorde G-BOAF (Alpha Fox) – the last Concorde ever to fly.

Formerly a volunteer team leader for Concorde at Filton, Paul describes his work there and his current activities in bringing together groups of Concorde enthusiasts to visit the aircraft and share their experiences. He gives a full history of Concorde G-BOAF; despite my own 15 years of involvement with Concorde, I still learned new things here.

The rest of the book is laid out as six chapters. There is no text; the photographs tell their own story. The changing scenery, from winter mist to dark clouds to bright summer sunshine, speaks of the team’s dedication to Alpha Fox in all weathers. The close-up shots express Paul’s attention to the elements that

make Concorde unique, from the reheat switches and droop-snoot mechanism to the immaculate luxury of the cabin and the complexity of the engines. My favourite photos are the ones that highlight Concorde’s beauty; the extravagant curve of the wing, the fineness of the nose, the instruments on the flight deck.

The book does convey the extent to which Paul has missed working with Alpha Fox since Concorde at Filton closed in October 2010, and draws attention to the wealth of knowledge and experience held by the former guides – a unique human resource that could still be drawn on today. Paul is, however, fair in commending the work that Airbus did to maintain and repair Alpha Fox, and the care taken in moving her to her new hangar. To my mind, though, these notes of controversy are simply part of the rich history that enfolds Concorde.