

# MACH 2

Concorde  
magazine

Concorde and  
Cunard  
*Charter flights  
from Prestwick*

The elusive  
Alpha Echo  
*News from  
Barbados*

Concorde watch  
*The latest from  
Toulouse and UK*

Issue 46  
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# INTRODUCTION

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*We begin this issue by looking back at some of the Concorde charters, which brought the supersonic experience within reach of ordinary people looking for the trip of a lifetime. Gary Reavely, Director of Travel Matters, looks back at his experience of organising charter flights from Prestwick – an airport that was more usually associated with training Concorde crew.*

*We also have recent news from various museums. Most excitingly, we hear from Paul Evans, who led a tour group to Barbados to see G-BOAE. At Manchester, the Leather Repair Company have been refurbishing G-BOAC’s luxurious leather seats. At Filton, Paul also organised a commemorative event centred on G-BOAF, to mark the anniversaries of the first and last British Concorde flights.*

*In addition, we review Captain Concorde, a memoir by British Airways Chief Concorde Pilot Brian Walpole. We end with Concorde Watch reports from Toulouse and from Heritage Concorde.*

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Editor: Katie John

Cover photo: G-BOAE on display at Grantley Adams International Airport, Barbados, as part of the new cruise terminal. Photo: Paul Evans

# MAKING DREAMS COME TRUE

*During Concorde's time in service, Glasgow Prestwick airport on the west coast of Scotland was used for training flight crew. What is less well known is that Prestwick was also a base for Concorde charter flights. Gary Reavely, Director of Travel Matters, organised charters with Cunard; he recalls the excitement of these special flights.*

I BECAME a huge plane enthusiast after my first flight on a Court Line BAC 1-11 in the late 1960s. Then, three days after leaving school in 1977, I started with Servisair at Edinburgh Airport, working in check-in, passenger handling and as a despatcher. We handled Dan Air, Laker, Britannia, Aer Lingus, Air Anglia, Sterling, and Monarch, as well as many ad hoc charters, from DC-3s to Boeing 747s.

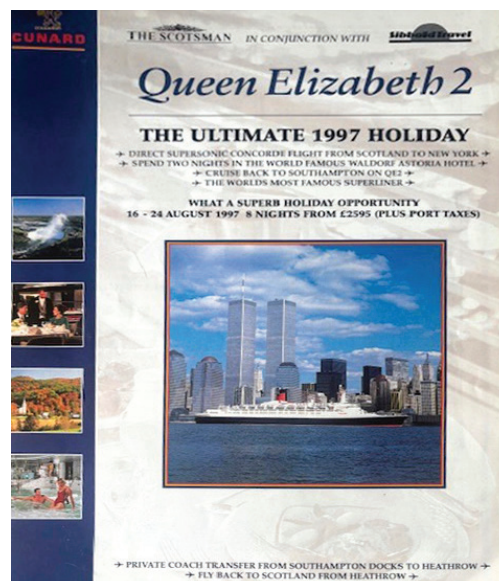
After this period, I worked for a 12-branch Edinburgh travel agent as Director of Sales and Marketing. In 1984 I won a trip to fly Concorde Heathrow – Washington Dulles – Miami (LHR–IAD–MIA) – and that was the beginning of a huge love affair with this incredible machine. I flew on her ten times: six supersonic and, unusually, four domestic subsonic repositioning flights: LHR–Prestwick (PIK) x 2, Glasgow (GLA)–LHR, and Edinburgh (EDI)–LHR.

## Concorde and Cunard

I was very much into ocean cruising. In addition, our company was a top agent for Cunard Line, and in particular their flagship – the Queen Elizabeth 2 (QE2). Cunard pioneered a partnership with British Airways (BA) offering “The Ultimate Transatlantic and Travel Experience” – fly one way to/from New York (JFK) in a few hours on a scheduled Concorde flight, and cruise the other way in 6 nights from/to New York and Southampton.

Cunard saw the opportunity to offer regional BA Concorde charters – and this is where I came in. My task was to sell the 100 seats from PIK to JFK.

Cunard were able to get a very good deal from BA as it was great aircraft utilisation for them. There were some minor differences from regular scheduled flights: catering was not quite so lavish, and there was one less cabin crew member. One of the Captains told me that they and the cabin crew loved operating charters – they were well aware that



## Preparing for flight

Above: Gary Reavely poses with other team members in front of Concorde.  
Photo: Gary Reavely

## The ultimate holiday

Left: A brochure for the lavish tour to New York, including a flight on Concorde and a journey on the QE2.  
Photo: Gary Reavely

for many of the passengers this was going to be the best day of their lives, and they were determined to put on a show for them. They most certainly did that!

BA had very strict aircraft take-off performance rules for westbound Concorde cruise charter flights; the aircraft would be heavier than normal, as it carried much more luggage, so runway length was critical. This effectively meant LHR–Manchester (MAN)–PIK departures only. Eastbound was not an issue, though, and JFK to Belfast (BFS) and Bournemouth (BOH) were popular.

In 1997 the cost of a one-way BA ticket LHR to JFK was circa £3,000 – but we were offering the PIK–JFK Concorde flight, two nights at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York, transfers in New York, sightseeing tour, 6 nights full-board crossing on the QE2 to Southampton, transfer to LHR and BA flight back to Scotland – guess how much? From £2,595 plus taxes of £130 – BARGAIN!

## Promoting the charters

The reason Cunard asked me to work on the charters was that I organised official reader travel holidays for a number of top newspapers in Scotland, and thus I partnered with them to sell the trip with no advertising cost for me or Cunard.

In order to sell the seats, and quickly, I hit on the idea of inviting Captain Brian Walpole, who was then the Concorde fleet General Manager and chief pilot, to come to Edinburgh along with a former Captain of the QE2 to host a Captains' VIP Guests Party for specially invited clients who I thought would be interested in travelling on this trip. To my surprise they both accepted, and we were on for a promotional night that I would never better.

BA at that time had a video (remember them...) called *Concorde – The Spirit of Excellence*, which showcased the training process for would-be Concorde flight deck and cabin crew as well as highlighting a typical day. I hired an especially large screen to show the video, for maximum impact when showing the aircraft taking off and in flight. I had the pleasure of introducing Captain Walpole, and then sat back in awe – he stood up in his full uniform and gave the most incredible presentation about the Concorde flying experience and what passengers could expect were they to book the trip. We then showed the video. This did the trick. I sold 36 seats on the night

– one gentleman giving me £1,000 in cash to ensure two places on board! We sold the remainder of the seats very quickly.

I was then thrilled to be asked by Cunard to travel on the flight and escort the group. As the flight was technically a charter it had a lower priority when it came to obtaining scarce take-off and landing slots at LHR and JFK, and I had regular anxious dialogue with BA's Concorde charter manager to get the final confirmed timings and then put everything else into place (on one occasion only a week prior to departure...).

## Flying from Prestwick

For the first flight, we laid on an executive coach from Edinburgh to Prestwick. It departed at 04:00. I was up at 02:00 to pick up the morning newspapers for my clients; I also had to make and serve the tea and coffee, as the hostess I had hired for the trip called in sick.

Prestwick were fantastic to deal with; they were well aware of the publicity the trip would generate, as were BA. An exclusive check-in area was arranged, as well as refreshments in the lounge. The aircraft was specially parked at the end of the pier, and we put down a red carpet from the pier to the aircraft steps. BA sent two uniformed staff from GLA; they escorted the passengers from the pier to the bottom of the steps, past a piper who piped them along the red carpet –



### VIP welcome

A passenger is piped on board Concorde.

Photo: Gary Reavely



my photographer capturing the moment for posterity. The passengers walked up the steps to be met by the waiting cabin crew, with the magic words 'Welcome on board Concorde' – what a first impression!

The whole airport ground to a halt as she started her engines, taxied the full length of the runway and lined up to depart straight out over the North Atlantic. On board, the atmosphere was electric.

The next three and half hours was magical as the BA crew made it the experience of a lifetime for the passengers. There was huge excitement and cheering as we went through

*"The whole airport ground to a halt as she started her engines ... On board, the atmosphere was electric"*

the sound barrier and up to our cruise altitude of 58,000 feet. The champagne flowed, and there was quite a party – some of my clients were a bit 'tired and emotional' prior to landing, so I had to fill in several USA Customs and Immigration forms to help them out.

We managed to get every passenger up to the flight deck to have their picture taken and have the much sought-after flight certificate signed by the pilots and flight engineer. The Captain walked the whole length of the aircraft chatting to everyone and clearly loving all the attention and picture requests.

All in all, I sold four of these very special charters – PIK–JFK twice as well as JFK–EDI and JFK–GLA. For each trip there was a subsonic positioning flight from/to LHR to be made, which was costed in to the charter price. I was massively privileged on all four occasions to be given by Cunard the positioning leg to do with as I pleased.

The pilots loved to fly these subsonic short flights; the aircraft was substantially lighter than normal and procedure dictated that they still had to use the reheats on take-off. One Captain summed it up beautifully as we taxied out at LHR: 'Ladies and gentlemen, if

you imagine comparing a Boeing 747's take-off performance against Concorde's like cars, then you are comparing a Ford Escort to a Lamborghini – and you are about to discover the difference for yourselves!'

The four Rolls-Royce engines spooled up, brakes released, and what happened next was astounding – the closest the average person will get to departing an aircraft carrier on a fighter jet. You were unceremoniously pushed back into your seat due to the sheer power and acceleration along the runway, with an equally impressive climb-out. At about 15,000 feet the Captain announced we had been cleared to 30,000 feet, and he would show us what the aircraft could do. Cue the power applied again. Gill Maguire, who worked for Emirates, was sitting beside me and she screamed loudly, as the pilot was as good as his word!

On these flights I sold seats for £150, which included a glass of champagne and a Concorde model. I invited my company's airline, cruise line and tour operator sales managers to be our guests to thank them for their support, as well as BA ground staff. We also hosted a group of children from a leukaemia charity, and had a gentleman propose to his girlfriend on board. (We had flowers and champagne waiting; thankfully she said yes, and the Captain announced it to loud cheers of approval.)

It was a magical time and such a pleasure and privilege to make the dream of flying on Concorde come true for so many people.

BA – you were amazing!

### **A lasting memory**

The quintessential image of Concorde charter flights from Prestwick – the aircraft is serenaded by a lone piper.

*Photo: Gary Reavely*





# Attention to detail

*A family firm that has built a reputation internationally for breathing new life into prized possessions from classic cars to swanky sofas is reaching for the sky after being appointed to clean the seats on Concorde G-BOAC.*

THE LEATHER REPAIR COMPANY, run by Richard and Carolynne Hutchins, has been carrying out restoration work for the seats on Concorde G-BOAC, which attracts thousands of visitors every year to the Runway Visitor Park at Manchester Airport.

The Concorde coup came about after the couple found themselves with time to kill while waiting for a delayed flight from Manchester to the United States. They went to the Runway Visitor Park and decided to offer their services.

## Admiring Concorde

Richard said: “We didn’t know the Runway Visitor Park was there, never mind Concorde, but we did the tour and we were fascinated by the stories about the plane and her passengers. Sitting in the cockpit we found ourselves cocooned in a very small space surrounded by an immense amount of buttons and dials. Just seeing the plane reminded me of my time growing up in the south when we would hear Concorde flying high above.”

Queen Elizabeth II flew on Concorde G-BOAC many times, as did countless celebrities including George Michael – whose album *Patience* featured a white leather sofa which last year took centre stage in Richard’s and Carolynne’s Hull workshop while they restored its gleaming original look.

While admiring Concorde, Richard and Carolynne met John Hepple from the Runway Visitor

## The project begins

The first batch of seats, removed from the cabin and dismantled.  
*Photo: The Leather Repair Company*

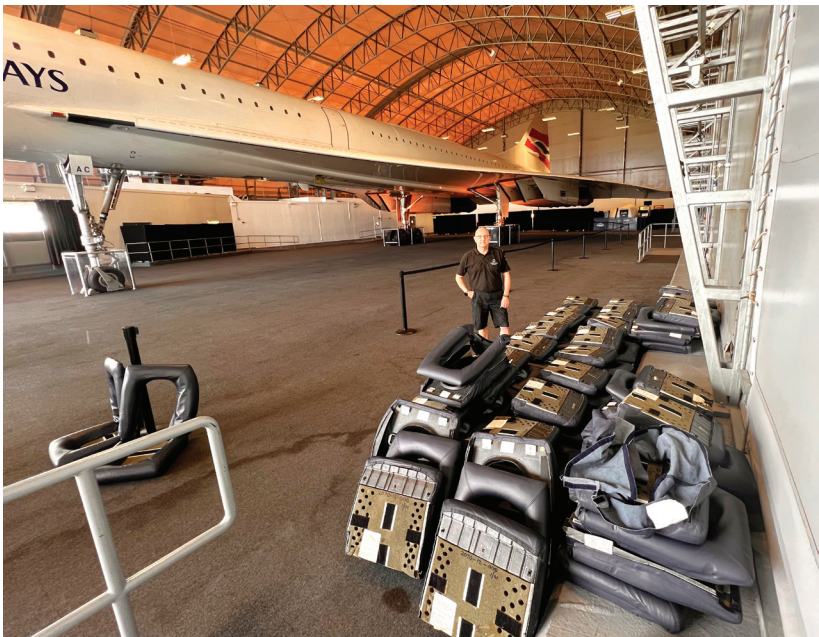


## A visit to the flight deck

Richard and Carolynne on G-BOAC’s flight deck, dazzled by the “immense amount of buttons and dials”.  
*Photo: The Leather Repair Company*

Park and heard how the iconic jet is considered the star of the collection and is housed in her own hangar, which doubles as an event space

accommodating up to 750 guests with full catering services.  
John said: “Once the choice of business leaders, celebrities, and the





public for trips of a lifetime, Concorde's legendary flight experience continues to captivate visitors over 20 years after her retirement.

"Our tours attract as many as 400 visitors each weekend, with events drawing more than 200 attendees. We utilise only 40 seats in the front cabin, leading to increased wear over time, despite the durability of the Terence Conran design."

### Sympathetic restoration

Richard and Carolynne took two seats for testing at their premises in Argyle Industrial Estate in Hull and, after successful trials, are now restoring the rest in batches. Richard said: "It will be a very sympathetic restoration – we need to make sure the seats still look old but are well cared for. We were immediately struck by how light they are. The backs are carbon fibre and it's no effort at all to lift them."

"We found a few things stuffed down the side of the seats. US and UK coins, card from some Varda Chocolatier miniature bon bons from Elizabeth, New Jersey, and some toothpicks, fortunately still wrapped so not damaging the seats or the visitors!"

The first phase of the seat cleaning is now complete. Seats from the rear cabin were removed first for refurbishing; these were returned to Concorde on 25



### The first batch for refurbishment

Richard and Carolynne with the first batch of seats, taken from the rear cabin and packed in their van, ready for the journey to Hull. These seats have now been restored and re-fitted to G-BOAC's front cabin.

*Photo: The Leather Repair Company*

February and were fitted in the front cabin. In the words of John Hepple, they "look brilliant – as new!". The seats removed from the forward cabin are currently being worked on; these had experienced more wear, but should be finished in the next 2–3 months.

## The Leather Repair Company: background

Richard and Carolynne Hutchins set up the Leather Repair Company in a garden shed at their home in Withernsea, East Yorkshire, in 2007 and now operate from the Argyle Industrial Estate in Hull. They work on repairing and restoring everything from shoes, garments and bags to car upholstery and household furniture.

Richard Hutchins founded the business with his wife Carolynne in 2007. Richard's background is in car valeting and he met Carolynne when she joined the company as a secretary. After working together for someone else they decided to set up their own business and, after starting with car valeting, found customer demand taking them into other areas.

Richard said: "People were so impressed with our valeting work on their cars that they would ask us to do other jobs for them. That led to our work in leather and over the years we have helped to restore the exteriors of helicopters, planes and boats."

About 80 per cent of business now comes from the supply of own-brand specialist leather cleaning and restoration products, including a range of sprays, creams and dyes, and from training

in how to use them. Almost all the products are water-based, with the business having focused on removing solvents from their processes.

Richard and Carolynne Hutchins are polishing their skills to meet the needs of other aviation clients as the first business in Europe to be trained and accredited to the international standard of the Aviation Detailing Association.



### Restoring an icon

Carolynne and Richard with the white sofa that featured on the cover of George Michael's album *Patience*.

*Photo: The Leather Repair Company*



## Mission accomplished

*When Concorde G-BOAF was withdrawn from public display at Filton in 2010, Paul Evans and his team of “Concorde at Filton” volunteers took on a new mission: to visit all 18 of the existing Concorde around the world. Here, Paul describes a unique trip to Barbados to see Concorde G-BOAE – the last one on their list, and an aircraft that had itself been closed to visitors since 2018.*

**B**ACK IN OCTOBER 2010 the Concorde at Filton (CAF) volunteers closed the doors of G-BOAF for the final time, ending over six years of loyal volunteering in running our highly acclaimed guided tours. The aircraft was going off public display for Airbus to conduct a deep maintenance programme. Little did we know that it would be 13 long years before we would return to Filton and Aerospace Bristol to go back to doing what we loved, showing off our beautiful aircraft to guests.

During these “wilderness years”, I decided to set up a small travel group, primarily for us former CAF volunteers to stay in touch and meet up once a year whilst visiting the UK-based Concorde, beginning with the flagship G-BOAC at Manchester. The group would be called Foxie’s Filton Flyers, named after our Concorde of course.

Over a period of several years, the group continued to grow, to the point where we ended up welcoming other museum volunteers, enthusiasts and even former British Airways (BA) and Air France engineering staff and crew. We visited 16 of the remaining 18 aircraft around the world, always being welcomed warmly by each museum or location whilst enjoying special hospitality and extras not usually granted to the general public.

To be honest, I was not intending to put together another group trip as we had visited all 16 of the accessible aircraft; this, plus a combination of work, family commitments, and health issues made me

### Concorde in Barbados

The hangar where G-BOAE is housed. The “Concorde at Barbados” exhibit had been closed for several years, making Alpha Echo inaccessible to visitors.  
*Photo: Paul Evans*



believe that Foxie’s Filton Flyers was grounded.

However, in November 2023, purely by chance I connected with an individual on LinkedIn who was based at Grantley Adams International Airport in Barbados, and who was responsible for G-BOAE. We started communicating intermittently, then in one of our conversations I dropped the line “maybe I should bring a group out to visit you” as a bit of a joke. You can imagine my surprise when I was met with the reply: “Sure, let’s talk next year.”

From there, it was time to start once again planning a tour!

### Here we go again!

Over the Christmas and New Year period I met up with a friend who works at BA and told them about the planned trip and everything we had done previously. They said they would speak to “people” internally at BA, as this is something they would love to get involved with.

This would be a smaller group tour: just 10-15 of us. We agreed on the dates and duration and booked tickets in the BA New Year’s Sale. Foxie’s Filton Flyers would visit

“The Final One”, G-BOAE, during September/October 2024.

At the beginning of 2024, several individuals visited the aircraft, which was well publicised in the local Barbados press and on social media, so things were looking promising. Unfortunately, around this time coincidentally, communication with Grantley Adams slowed down considerably. I was reassured by friends who had previous experience of dealing with Barbados businesses that this is quite normal as they take the “laid back” approach and occasionally take several weeks or months to respond.

As the summer months went by, I started getting a little apprehensive as all communication had ceased. It was at this stage that I put a desperate call in to a good friend at BA; I explained the situation, the pending group holiday and a little about the group’s history.

From this moment on, it really did become a BA-sponsored trip, as many former Captains who had flown Concorde before moving on to other aircraft in the current fleet, or had been long retired, all reached out and offered their advice along



with any assistance they could. I must publicly acknowledge and state that without the assistance and support from these folks and BA, the trip would not have been the wonderful success it turned out to be.

The long weeks went by, with various emails, LinkedIn messages, and phone calls being exchanged until one week before departure and THE email direct from BA Management that I had been eagerly awaiting. We had been granted permission, as exclusive guests of BA, to a private visit of G-BOAE on the first day of our trip, being welcomed and accompanied by the BA Airport Manager based at Grantley Adams for the visit.

However, that was just part of it; as a special thank-you to the group for our support in using British Airways for all our previous Concorde trips all over Europe and the United States, the airline would be arranging for us to have a special tour of their HQ, Waterside and the Heritage Centre plus a very special visit to G-BOAB at Heathrow, which as everyone knows is just about as close to airside you can get, on the day before we flew out to Barbados. This tour would be rounded off on departure day with a member of management meeting us early in the morning at T5 to welcome us, check us all in at the First Class check-in area, and then accompany us to the First Class Lounge.

As you can imagine, I was exceptionally relieved, the group were speechless, and we could not wait for Monday September 23rd to arrive.

### **Waterside and G-BOAB**

The journey up from Swansea to London Paddington, followed by the Tube to Hatton Cross, seemed to take an age, but all went to time, and I arrived at my overnight hotel at Heathrow by 11:30. We had all arranged to meet up at LHR by 13:30, to travel over to Waterside for 14:00. Upon arrival we collected our waiting security passes and were



### **Concorde memorabilia**

Jim Davies (centre) of the BA Heritage Centre displays a selection of pieces of Concorde memorabilia to the group, including a message from the late Queen Elizabeth II following her flight to Barbados on Concorde.

*Photo: Paul Evans*

welcomed by the wonderful Jim Davies at the BA Heritage Centre, where they had put on refreshments for us along with having on display some very special Concorde items and memorabilia from their extensive collection. These included a personal message from Her Majesty, the late Queen Elizabeth II, thanking BA for the Duke of Edinburgh's and her wonderful experience flying on Concorde to Barbados on the occasion of her Silver Jubilee back in 1977. Which Concorde did she fly on? G-BOAE.

We could have stayed here for many hours with Jim, but we had a schedule to adhere to. Saying our thanks and goodbyes to Jim we made our way over to Vanguard House for our 15:30 meeting with BA Engineering manager David and one of his apprentices, to collect our passes for a special visit.

We travelled in convoy through various security gates, finally parking up and passing through a rather imposing security pass-controlled turnstile gate, followed by a short walk – and then the familiar silhouette of that beautiful Concorde rear

fuselage and tail just off to the left of us. There she was: G-BOAB.

I cannot convey in words just how imposing and breathtaking the aircraft still looked. With many other aircraft arriving overhead and taxiing just behind us, there stood this epitome of engineering, still looking every inch the visitor from the future that she was. Now silenced, retired and grounded, she surveyed the home that she occupied and ruled for 27 faultless years of service as the Flagship of British Airways and undisputed Queen of the Skies.

She looked especially clean; we found out that the aircraft had received a second wash just 5 days ago, due to some “VIP visitors” who would be visiting the following week. (I wonder who they could have been?)

We spent well over an hour with Alpha Bravo, photographing and taking video of every conceivable angle, with David in no hurry to leave either. I had a sneaky feeling both his apprentice and he were enjoying the visit as much as all of us. We even witnessed five go-arounds



**Visiting Alpha Bravo**

BA Engineering manager David and his apprentice (above) and the members of Foxie's Filton Flyers (right) all enjoyed the special visit to see G-BOAB.  
*Photo: Paul Evans*



right next to us! Our visit to the aircraft only ended because the sun was setting, otherwise I think we would all have stayed longer.

It had been a fantastic start to the trip; how could it get any better than this?

**Departure day**

We arranged to meet at Heathrow Terminal Five for 08:30 on departure day: Tuesday 24 September 2024. Before we all met up, I had been very kindly invited to visit the BA Operations Centre located within the depths of T5. This was an eye-opening experience: a fascinating look into the day-to-day running of the entire BA operation, crew briefings, etc, and was very gratefully appreciated thanks to my friend, Peter Longden.

When I returned upstairs to the main T5 Departures, it was 08:30 and the rest of the group were waiting by the First-Class Check-in area. We were warmly welcomed by our host, Justean, who also used to work in the Concorde check-in at T4. She was fascinated about our trip and was interested in where all the Concorde's are now and how

they could be visited. Then our host for the morning, the Premium Customer Manager for the airline, came to greet us and escorted us through to the First-Class security area.

From here we all excitedly made our way down the corridor to where the black horse lamp greets all First customers, through to the lounge. At this point there was yet another surprise. We were escorted to the left of the First lounge, down to the Concorde Room, where I was told as we approached that we could all have a group photo in front of G-BOAF's original radome on the

balcony – and whilst we were there, “British Airways would like to invite you all to have breakfast with us in the Concorde Room”! As you can imagine, at this point we all were completely speechless.

We had several group photos taken in front of the radome, before enjoying breakfast and spending over two wonderful hours in this very exclusive lounge, being treated like royalty by the attentive and professional Concorde Room staff, who ensured that our champagne glasses never ran empty for the entire visit. It was an unforgettable experience,

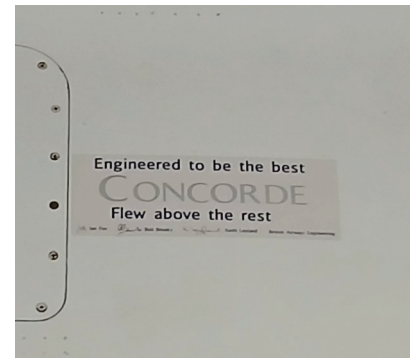


**With Concorde's radome**

Left: Paul Evans with the BA Premium Customer Manager, Ceri ('Presh').  
Right: The group gather in front of G-BOAF's radome.  
*Photos: Paul Evans*







### Perfection

Left: G-BOAE, in immaculate condition, in what would become the new cruise transfer terminal.

Above: The very apt motto carried on the engine nacelle of every Concorde.

*Photos: Paul Evans*

and we could not have dreamed of a more perfect start to our final supersonic adventure. The past 24 hours had been simply magical, and we can never thank everyone involved at BA enough for making it all happen.

Before we knew it, the time had arrived for us to make our way to our aircraft (a brand new 787-10, the newest aircraft in the BA fleet at the time) and our flight to Grantley Adams International. We pushed back on time and taxied out, passing G-BOAB before turning onto runway 27L ready for take-off.

Next stop Barbados!

We had a great flight, with some turbulence en route, arriving at Grantley Adams around 16:00 local time, and catching a glimpse of the old "Barbados Concorde Experience" building as we taxied.

After negotiating the most efficient and pleasant immigration I have ever experienced, I found myself waiting for our hotel transfer next to Sir Cliff Richard!

Once at the hotel, an early night was on the cards, as the next day was going to be eventful.

### The visit to number 18

Our visit to G-BOAE, the 18th and last Concorde on our list, on 25 September 2024 had been arranged

for 12:00. Our minibus arrived at 11:15 so we could get there in plenty of time. On the short journey from St. Lawrence Gap back to the airport, I sat in the front quietly reflecting on the past several months but bursting with excitement inside.

We met the BA Airport manager based at Grantley Adams, a lovely lady called Elizabeth who welcomed the group and chatted with us, whilst we waited for the gates to be unlocked. We parked outside the building, where a large, sculptured chrome silhouette of Concorde stood amongst landscaped gardens. A lady then came out to introduce herself: Crystal, who would be taking us in to view G-BOAE.

Walking slowly on in, I noticed brand new security scanners and seats, which were in preparation for the new cruise transfer terminal facility, but then my attention was drawn to something else. There she was – the one I had been waiting to see since November 17th 2003, the final Concorde take-off I had ever witnessed. Now here we were, almost 21 years later, with the final Concorde to visit standing majestically in front of us all: G-BOAE.

As everyone came in and went off to take their photos and videos, I just stood there in silence (which is unusual for me!) staring directly up

at this beautiful, sculptured machine which had been the cause of so many wonderful adventures and experiences. It is impossible to put down in words accurately what this moment meant to me personally, so I am not going to even attempt it.

Walking around the exterior of the aircraft, I stopped to chat and say thank you to Elizabeth, Crystal and the two workers who stopped everything just for us to have this time with Alpha Echo. (Both Elizabeth and Crystal were on their lunchbreaks.) I walked around Alpha Echo slowly several times in a bit of a daze, taking in as much as I could, taking hundreds of photos and shooting some video. I know that Evie from Evie Aviation, who came with us on this trip, took some wonderful shots and video, which I am sure will be on her Facebook and YouTube channel in the future.

We gathered at the rear of the aircraft for several group photos, including some with Elizabeth and Crystal, before going underneath Alpha Echo to view a treasure trove of trunks and crates containing BA Concorde spares, memorabilia, dinner services – and the United Kingdom and Barbados flags used by Captain Mike Bannister and Captain Les Brodie when the aircraft arrived on 17 November 2003.

Overall, we spent over an hour with the aircraft. Everyone was so accommodating, and in no rush for us to hurry up. It was a truly brilliant and unforgettable time. I really did not want to leave, as being honest I had no idea when I would see this Concorde again; after all, Barbados is rather difficult to get to!

Finally, it was time to depart. I went to thank both Elizabeth and Crystal again for their warm welcome and kindness in hosting us and gave one of our special tour polo shirts to them as a thank you from the group.

The journey back to the hotel was a bit of a daze to be honest. I put my sunglasses on whilst sat in the front as I did have a little weep to myself; I was thinking of everyone who had stepped up to support and help to make this happen, and being able to say we did it. It was a wonderful feeling, especially to be able to share it with friends – from those who have been with me from the beginning at Filton, the beginning of Foxie’s Filton Flyers, to those new friends who were experiencing one of our international trips for the first time.

Now I could relax and enjoy my holiday!

**Final thoughts**

Having now visited every one of the remaining 18 Concorde around the world, I have no hesitation in stating that G-BOAE is the best-preserved example externally I have seen (with F-BVFA at the Smithsonian in Washington, Dulles a very close second).

She looks incredible, benefiting from a recent polish that highlighted the sheen and condition of her airframe. A huge amount of thanks should go to the gentleman tasked with the responsibility of looking after the aircraft and the two former BA ground engineers who still work at the airport but come in on their days off to do work on the aircraft. Their efforts are certainly very evident when you see Alpha Echo up close.

What does the future hold for G-BOAE?

She will be the centrepiece of the new cruise transfer terminal during the cruise holiday season and is being very well looked after and cared for. Let us also hope that she will soon re-open as a tourist attraction offering booked guided tours once again when the cruise season comes to an end, as I am sure there will be an abundance of Concorde aficionados around the world queuing up to once again visit this beautiful example – as well as many thousands of visitors and holiday makers who pass through Grantley Adams each year. Plus, I am sure there is an equal number of current museum Concorde tour guides who would gladly offer their support!



**A fond farewell**

The group gathers for one last photo beneath Alpha Echo’s tail, at the end of a trip of a lifetime.  
*Photo: Paul Evans*

**Grateful thanks from Paul Evans**

I wish to offer my sincere thanks to everyone listed below, without whom this trip would never have happened and become the perfect way for us to conclude our supersonic adventures.

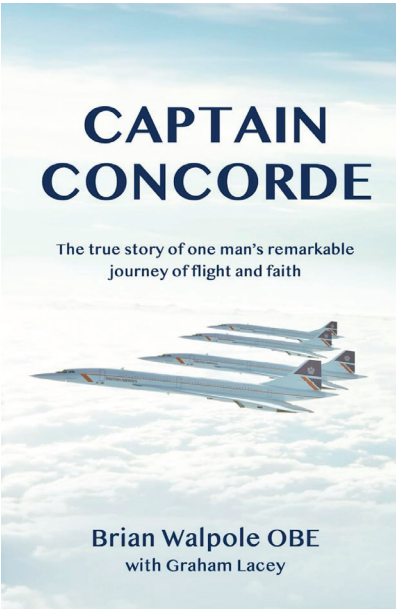
- British Airways
- Jim Davies at the BA Heritage Centre, and the Waterside staff
- British Airways Engineering LHR
- BA Premium Customer Manager LHR
- BA Premium Customer Teams at LHR, First check-in and the Concorde Room
- Peter Longden
- Captain Paul Griffin

- Captain John Tye
- Captain John Hutchinson
- The staff at Grantley Adams International Airport (GAIA), Barbados
- Janie Day (for all your invaluable advice on all things Barbados!)
- Rosie Thompson, Stephen Johnstone, Ken and Sally Ricketts, Pete and Mhairi-Ann Banham, Evie Aviation, Martin Tornberg and Paul Paruch for not just being the best group of friends I could have asked to share this final trip with, but also for all your support, advice, and patience over these past ten months whilst putting this trip together.



# Captain Concorde: a memoir

*Over Concorde’s history of nearly 60 years, thousands of people have been involved in designing, building, flying, and preserving the aircraft – but a few people have played a pivotal role. One such is Brian Walpole, former Chief Concorde Pilot for British Airways, whose memoir looks back over 90 years of aviation adventure.*



Malcolm Down  
Publishing 2024  
ISBN: 978-1-917-455008  
£11.99 Paperback

THIS BOOK HAS BEEN WRITTEN to appeal to both aviation enthusiasts and Christians. For those who share in the faith, Brian Walpole traces his journey towards belief. For those of us reading to learn about Concorde, the book is equally rich and thought-provoking.

Brian Walpole’s early career in aviation was stellar: flying the Gloster Meteor and participating in the RAF’s first formation aerobatic flying team, then entering service with the British Overseas Airways Corporation (BOAC) on the Argonaut and the Boeing 707, as both pilot and navigator – plotting routes across the ocean using only the stars

for guidance. Then, at British Airways (BA) in 1976, Brian Walpole attained the ultimate pilot’s role as Captain on Concorde. He recalls the supersonic airliner as both beauty and beast – demanding constant concentration during flights, but uniquely rewarding.

Yet Concorde faced some serious dangers during her early years – and Brian Walpole played a vital part in overcoming those challenges. First, there was the question of whether Concorde would be allowed to fly the route for which she was designed: transatlantic to New York. Captain Walpole and his French counterpart Jean Franchi overcame the noise objections, and survived a hostile press conference, to see the atmosphere change completely as Concorde’s beauty was revealed to the attendees.

Just as threatening were the economic risks to Concorde. In the earliest years at BA, Concorde was losing millions, and Brian Walpole and his colleague Jock Lowe faced a “mountain” to make the aircraft profitable. Lord King, then BA’s Chairman, gave Captains Walpole and Lowe just two years to turn Concorde’s fortunes around – and they achieved this summit within just 12 months. Concorde would go on to generate a “halo effect” for the airline as a whole. This effect was enhanced by the formation flight carried out by four BA Concorde on 24 December 1985, to mark the 10th anniversary of Concorde services. As the captain of the leading Concorde, Brian Walpole’s expertise in formation flying would come into play for this breathtaking occasion.

Captain Walpole also recounts some less orthodox excursions

with Concorde. One was the very low-level flight over the Caribbean, close to the Royal Yacht Britannia, as HM Queen Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh looked on and waved. This resulted in amazing photographs – but some searching questions at BA and the Civil Aviation Authority, only resolved after an intervention on behalf of the Queen. Even more extraordinary was the incident in which Captain Walpole and Captain Franchi performed a barrel roll in a Concorde (during a flight to test a new torque meter on the undercarriage, following a tyre blow-out on a British Concorde).

Captain Walpole’s career in aviation, and with Concorde, came to an unfortunate end following a flight in which he landed in London with what was considered to be a less than adequate reserve of fuel. The ensuing investigation continued beyond the retirement point of his 55th birthday, so he would never fly Concorde again. He describes how his faith, as well as support from family and friends, helped him through this difficult time. Fifteen years later Concorde herself would be gone, a casualty of the crash in Paris and the horrific events of 9/11 as well as the economic climate.

After all the highs and lows, Brian Walpole still feels “pride in what Concorde achieved, not only in aviation and engineering terms but as one of the defining British icons of its era”. He ends his unique life story with an echo of the farewell that he used to give his Concorde passengers as they disembarked:

“I hope you enjoyed the experience – it’s certainly one I will forever appreciate and I wish you well on your onward journey”.

## Anniversary tour of G-BOAF

*On Saturday 12 April a commemoration was held to mark the very first and last flights of British Concorde. The event was organised by Paul Evans in conjunction with Aerospace Bristol; here he reports on this very special day.*

AT THE BEGINNING of the year, I had a very constructive and positive meeting with some of the management team at Aerospace Bristol to discuss our future tours and programme of events with Concorde Alpha Foxtrot in 2025 and beyond.

The first of these events was to be a commemoration at the museum in April to mark the very first flight of the UK prototype Concorde (G-BSST) on April 9th and the very first flight of the last Concorde (G-BOAF) on April 20th. The decision was made to host a ceremonial nose move on April 9th for the public, followed by our first special event of 2025 on Saturday April 12th.

### The anniversary event

This event was to be attended by Captain Les Brodie, the last person to ever fly Concorde; Captain Colin Morris, the longest-serving and certainly funniest Concorde Captain; Senior Engineer Officer (SEO) David Hoyle; and former Cabin crew and current BA In-Flight Manager (IFM) Neil Smith.

To start proceedings for the day, between 12:00 and 14:00 we held a highly informative, entertaining and on occasions hilarious Q&A with our four special guests, followed by photo and memorabilia signing opportunities. For those of you who were unable to attend I would strongly recommend booking on to the next one we hold so you can hear first-hand the tales of the structure of the upper rudder, and delamination of the skid/honeycomb bond; the awkward supermodel passenger; “let us not bother with the checklist today”; to the secret chocolate milk! The expressions on David’s, Les’s, and Neil’s faces when Colin was reminiscing about some of his experiences were priceless.

After the Q&A, Les and David took the family of former BA SEO Trevor Norcott (who sadly lost his battle with cancer late last year) on board the aircraft and on to the flight-deck to view the “office” where he had spent so much of his flying career. This was a very emotional and private moment as it was the first time Trevor’s widow had returned to Filton since November 26th, 2003,



### In memoriam

The late Trevor Norcott at his flight engineer’s station, with Les Brodie in the captain’s seat.

Photo: Paul Evans

so we all respected their privacy and went to the brand-new Flight-line café to catch up and discuss our tour later that afternoon.

### The Mach Two tour

For this tour we were pleased to welcome former Rolls-Royce and current Aerospace Bristol volunteer Alan Vickers to the team. He would be showing guests around the former Rolls-Royce training simulator.

At about 16:15 our 48 guests were escorted into the Concorde building to get their first glimpse of G-BOAF whilst enjoying champagne and canapés provided by Fosters Events. It was particularly lovely to see schoolfriends I have not seen for many years, and friends/colleagues from Brooklands Museum and Concorde G-BBDG too (James Coombe and Franklyn Edwards) joining the rest of our guests.

### The Q&A session

The speakers treat the visitors to a wealth of entertaining tales from their years of working with Concorde.

Photo: Paul Evans







The tour format was run as previously but with an extended time in each of the sections, with the added attraction of having former crew in their old “offices” engaging with the guests. Neil did a sterling job in the forward cabin sharing personal reflections, experiences, and stories of his time on board, including on the very final flight home to Filton. (Next time there will be a large bottle of cold water for you, Neil!) On the flight deck we had the rare treat of a full former BA flight crew with Captains Les Brodie and Colin Morris and SEO David Hoyle, who I think enjoyed their time back in the office even more than the guests!

At 18:55 everyone gathered on the balcony for a second glass of something sparkling and a nose move, conducted by Captain Les Brodie with informative and humorous commentary from Captain Colin Morris. To end the day, guests were presented with a commemorative Aerospace Bristol Concorde certificate, signed by the crew, plus a few other goodies.

A huge thank-you to Captain Les Brodie, Captain Colin Morris, SEO David Hoyle, and former BA Concorde cabin crew member and current IFM Neil Smith, for giving up your free time to spend the day with us and for providing our visitors, and the volunteers, with a unique and unforgettable experience – from the hugely entertaining and informative Q&A to the after-hours tour. The feedback from our guests has been brilliant and makes all the work worthwhile.

### Back at the office

Above: Neil Smith in the cabin.

Above right: Colin Morris and Les Brodie on the flight deck.

Right: Les Brodie, David Hoyle, Colin Morris and Neil Smith with Alpha Fox.

*Photos: Paul Evans*



Many thanks also to Concorde at Filton volunteers Rosie Thompson, Colin Smith, Ken Ricketts, Tony Mumford, and Alan Vickers, and the brilliant Aerospace Bristol and Fosters team: Sally, Nicole, Eva, Olie, Alex, Paul, Maria and Florian.

It was also a pleasure to welcome the family of former BA Concorde SEO, the late Trevor Norcott, who were there as guests of Les Brodie.

### Future tours

We are planning to hold more of our standard Mach One tours in May, June, August and September before holding another Mach Two premium tour at the end of October to correspond with the 22nd anniversary of the final commercial flight with British Airways. For details, please see the Aerospace Bristol website: [aerospacebristol.org/](https://aerospacebristol.org/)



### The centrepiece

Alpha Fox performing a full nose move, with Les Brodie and Colin Morris on the flight deck.  
*Photo: Paul Evans*



Concorde Simulator

Air France simulator

Location: Aéroscopia Museum, Toulouse, France  
Reporter: Laurent Dupessey, Virtu'Ailes      Date: 3 March 2025

An introduction to the French simulator

It's been a while since the last update in this magazine about the restoration project of the French Concorde Simulator (see Mach 2, Nov 2022), so let's begin with a short presentation.

Virtu'Ailes is the association that has been maintaining and restoring the French Concorde simulator – an appellation used for our British readers more used to the Concorde simulator that was in service at Filton and mostly used to train British Airways' crews. Two simulators were built. They reproduced, to the best of 1970s technology, all of Concorde's systems in a cockpit. However, even if they were quite realistic, they were not "0 hours" simulators like those nowadays, so the final training for new crew was on the real aircraft without passengers. For Air France, the new crew still spent 60 hours in the simulator! The simulator was also used to maintain trained crew skills in handling failures, as crew still do nowadays.

This simulator was used mostly to train Air France's crews, but as it was part of Aérospatiale's Aéroformation training centre in Toulouse before being moved to Charles de Gaulle airport

in 1992, this was the one used to train Braniff crew in the 70s (see Mach 2, Feb 2019). It is now housed at Aéroscopia, the aeronautical museum in Toulouse, next to Concorde F-WTSB. The goal is to return the simulator to operational status for the public in the near future; people will be able to book "flights" at controls of the simulator in the same way they do to "fly" the simulator at Brooklands Museum.



Exterior view of the simulator  
The Concorde simulator at the exhibition in March.  
Photo: Virtu'Ailes

The restoration works continue on the simulator. A team based in the Toulouse area works regularly on it, but every three months the association organises a week-long work session where members that don't live in the area join the team effort; each of these occasions enables us to make major progress.

In March, the session was preceded by two special days on the week-end of the 2nd March, a well-known date, to celebrate the first ever Concorde flight, by prototype 001 (F-WTSS). Different exhibitions by Concorde volunteers' associations were available, and in addition conferences with people that worked on Concorde were organised by the museum.

Virtu'ailes had a stand near the simulator to display related items – notably the new electric jacks for the



Virtu'Ailes display  
The display showed items removed from the simulator, like this sample hydraulic jack for the flight controls, and a spare of the electronic jacks that were previously fitted.  
Photo: Virtu'Ailes



flight controls we installed last year, alongside the old hydraulic ones they replaced, and also a few old electronics boards.

**Recent work**

After this interesting two days, busy with visitors to our exhibit, we started the work week.

Progress was made this week with the nose/visor control and the parking brake, wired and controlled through simulation.

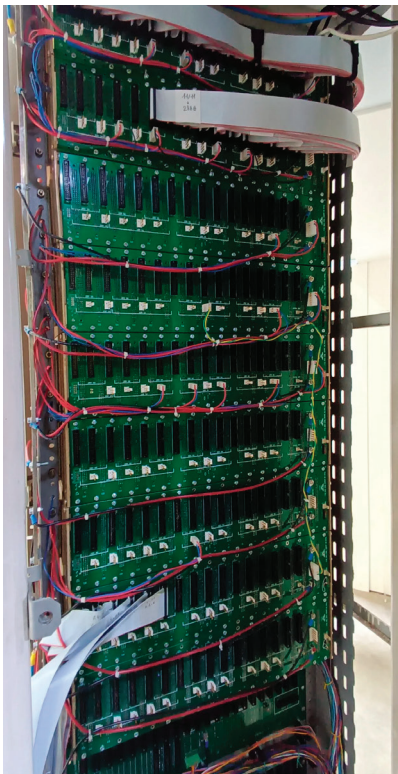
The wiring is also progressing, gradually but surely, on the racks. The cables must be very carefully positioned because there will be a lot

of cabling in the area, and space is still quite limited.

Thanks to Jean, Florent, Christian, Laurent, Daniel, Philippe, team members, and other staff who are participating in this tedious and long-term project. The photos also show the control boards for the various racks, which are beginning to be installed and activated now we have the full backbone installed.

Our next week-long session is planned for the end of June or beginning of July.

For updates on our work, please visit our website: [virtuailles.fr/](http://virtuailles.fr/)



**Work in progress**

Left and above: The backplane for the control racks.

Below: The visor moving after selection with the visor/nose switch.

Photos: Virtu'Ailes



## Concorde G-AXDN and others British aircraft

**Location:** Duxford, Manchester, Brooklands, UK

**Reporter:** Graham Cahill **Date:** 1 May 2025

This report is a general update from Heritage Concorde. While we haven't been to visit any Concorde apart from G-AXDN since the last update, the work does not stop behind the scenes. We do have engineering visits booked for May/June. Here is what we have been up to since our last visit.

### 1. Hydraulic power packs

We have purchased three desiccant breathers for G-AXDN, G-BOAC and G-BBDG. One has been fitted by our team to G-AXDN to check for any issues. These breathers will ensure that the fluid inside the tanks of the three power packs that Hydraulics Online Limited supplied will be protected from moisture. The breathers were rather expensive, but it is more important that the rare oil for the nose systems is not polluted by water or moisture (particularly on G-BOAC and G-BBDG). We also purchased two sight gauges with low level switch: one for the hydraulic tank on board G-BBDG, and one for G-BOAC to replace the one already fitted as the oil level safety switch needs reconfiguring. We will keep you updated on this work.

### 2. Intake on G-AXDN

We have obtained some parts for the intake on G-AXDN. We want to try to restore one intake on board this aircraft; however, we need spares. After putting the word out we have



### Torque tube

Graham Cahill (left) with Jim from Aviart, who donated the torque tube.

*Photo: Heritage Concorde*

obtained one brand new torque tube, which will be a major step towards restoration. Thanks to Jim from Aviart for helping with this; we are most grateful. Website link here: [aviartdesign.com](http://aviartdesign.com)

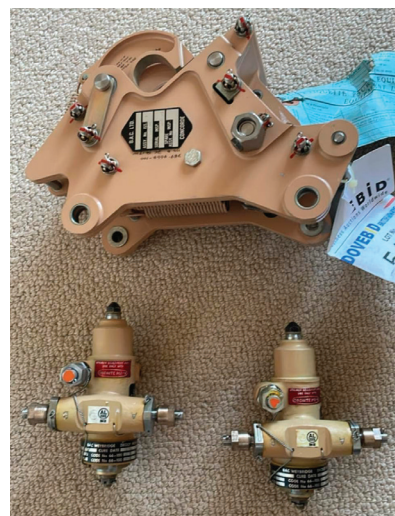
### 3. Nose on G-BBDG

We have also been after spares for the nose on board G-BBDG for some time now. We have obtained two nose uplock actuators and a spare visor uplock (for any of the fleet that needs it) from Sam Parsons at Concorde Collectables. These spares will be given to Brooklands Museum, who are helping with some spares for G-AXDN at Duxford. Thanks to Sam for helping

### Desiccant filter and sight gauges

A desiccant filter (left), for any of the three aircraft, and the sight gauges (right) for G-BBDG and G-BOAC.

*Photo: Heritage Concorde*



### Visor uplock hook

This component can be fitted to any of the three Concorde.

*Photo: Heritage Concorde*

with this; website link here:

[concordecollectables.com](http://concordecollectables.com)

### 4. Nose jacks for G-AXDN

We have permission from British Airways and Brooklands to obtain spares for G-AXDN at Duxford. The spares (two pre-production nose jacks) will be restored and fitted to G-AXDN, then the ones that were removed will also be restored. This will ensure that we have spares for pre-production aircraft G-AXDN.

Thanks to Brooklands and British Airways for their support in this matter. We will update as soon as there is more to tell.

For further details on the Concorde at these museums, see:

G-AXDN:

[www.duxfordaviationsociety.org/](http://www.duxfordaviationsociety.org/)

G-BBDG:

[www.brooklandsmuseum.com/](http://www.brooklandsmuseum.com/)

G-BOAC:

[www.runwayvisitorpark.co.uk/](http://www.runwayvisitorpark.co.uk/)