

# Concorde rises to new challenge

The Duke of Kent officially opened the newly-restored Concorde G-BBDG at Brooklands museum last week but the public had to wait until Tuesday to peer inside the pride of the Brooklands collection. *News and Mail* reporter Beth Woodger was among the first group of 'virtual' passengers. Pictures by Grahame Larter



Concorde, a star of the skies with a nose for fame.



Reporter Beth Woodger prepares to board Concorde.

THE *News and Mail* was lucky to be among the first passengers to take a flight on the newly opened Concorde at Brooklands Museum on Tuesday — although the aircraft sadly no longer leaves the ground.

So as I swapped my notebook for a boarding pass onto the supersonic jet, which has been thoroughly restored during the past two years, I felt privileged to be boarding a piece of British history.

The British Airways G-BBDG model, which is 203ft in length and 8ft wide, arrived at Brooklands in 2004 after British Airways offered the supersonic jet to the museum in October 2003.

The jet was cut into five different pieces so it could be transported to the museum and was then recon-

structed for to become the museum's newest exhibit.

Delta Golf, as the G-BBDG model is also known, was never used for commercial flights but used for flight-testing and staff training. It made its first flight in February 1974 and was the first aircraft to carry 100 people at Mach 2 in August 1974.

Its final flight was on Christmas Eve 1981 and in total it made 633 flights.

From the moment you purchase a flight ticket at a check-in desk complete with check-in staff, you are invited into the world of Concorde.

Visitors are given the chance to walk around the rear of the cabin, which has been adapted into a small museum dedicated to the landmark engineering project — more advanced in many ways than today's air-

craft. The labour that has gone into recreating the Concorde experience was evident from the start — from the uniforms on display to the knowledgeable guides who talk you through the flight.

Videos depicting the history of Concorde along with the renovation from start to finish are shown on screens before you take your seat in the cabin.

Volunteers and staff have re-built the cabin, complete with luxury grey leather seats and overhead cabins. On a screen at the front of the cabin, British Airways chief Concorde pilot Mike Bannister narrates a virtual journey, complete with realistic sounds.

The Mach counter at the front of the cabin counts the altitude throughout the duration of the flight. So as I

prepared for landing, I would definitely recommend the Concorde experience for anyone interested in the pioneering jet.

Visitors can grab a quick glance into the cockpit as they exit down the steps onto land again.

Children on the flight I was on appeared to be having a great time so as well as taking a trip in the holidays to the museum, book a flight on Concorde.

Project manager Gordon Roxburgh said: "Working on the restoration of Concorde has been my second job as I am also a chef at Sky TV."

"Concorde has always had a special place in my heart ever since I saw it at Prestwick Airport in Scotland when I was young. Brooklands is the place for Concorde to be."

"We have had an army of volunteers; more than 100 people working on the restoration."

"After all the work we have done on it is like we are handing our toy back to the public."

"It has been great fun working on it."

Volunteer Mike Brown, who was working on the flight, said: "I was lucky to fly on Concorde once when I was in film industry."

"We have had a really good response to the flights this morning, and people have written some fantastic comments in the visitors' book."

"I knew it would be a success, we had people queuing up for the first flight this morning."

Visitor service manager Mike Duvall said: "We wanted to be able to have Concorde as an exhibition in its own right. It is a piece of heritage and we wanted to preserve it and show people what the Concorde experience was like."

"We have tried to do this as best as we can and maybe in the future we may be able to do something more."

"We do have a Concorde simulator, which was used to train staff who flew on Concorde."

"This will be renovated in the future and when it is ready visitors will be able to sit in the cockpit and see



Step up for the Concorde experience.



Instantly recognisable, the futuristic Concorde.

what it was like to sit in the captain's seat."

Tickets for the Concorde experience are £4 for adults and £2 for chil-

dren. Flights depart every half an hour.

For more information call the museum on 01932 857381.