

MAIN ATTRACTION:
Concorde Delta Golf
in her new home at
Brooklands Museum



Back where she belongs

Concorde is unveiled at Brooklands

Prince Michael of Kent, who performed the official opening ceremony for the aircraft, described the moment as the proudest during his long association with the museum.

G-BBDG, known as Delta Golf, arrived at the museum in pieces in 2004 and has been painstakingly renovated by a team of experts aided by a band of willing volunteers.

Last Wednesday, the supersonic jet was officially opened for the Friends of Brooklands Museum, who had contributed to the project, and it went on public display on Monday.

Prince Michael's first experience of flying faster than the speed of sound, was aboard Delta Golf in the 1970s, and he has been an enthusiast for the beautiful aircraft ever since.

The prince, who is the patron of Brooklands Museum, added: "This is probably the most evocative aircraft of its day. People can actually sit in it and clamber around it.

"So many people have never had the opportunity to do so.

"This is an outstanding attraction for the whole area. I have opened many other exhibits at Brooklands, but I have never been as proud as this," he added.

Delta Golf was the first British production Concorde and the fastest of its type to have flown.

It never worked as a commercial aircraft, being used, instead, for engineering tests, route proving, Civil Aviation Authority certification and promotional work, including flying in formation with the Red Arrows.

Among its other claims to fame, Delta Golf was the



BACK AT THE CONTROLS: Former Concorde pilots Mike Bannister (left) and Christopher Orlebar check out the restored flight deck



IN PIECES: Delta Golf was cut into three sections so that it could be transported from Filton near Bristol to the Brooklands Museum site. Far right, Prince Michael of Kent

first Concorde to land at Heathrow, in 1974, and the first aircraft in the world to carry 100 passengers at Mach 2 supersonic flight.

But in 1981 it was retired from service and sent to Filton Airfield in Bristol, where it was cannibalised for spare parts for other still operational Concorde.

In 2003, soaring fuel prices and falling passenger numbers following the crash of one Concorde in Paris persuaded British Airways to retire the Concorde fleet.

Hundreds of museums around the world – including Brooklands – entered

the bidding to house all the remaining Concorde.

It was to the delight of hundreds of people who used to work at the old Weybridge British Aircraft Corporation works, now the site of the Brooklands museum, that it was awarded the aircraft.

Brooklands played a major role in the design, development construction and testing of the Concorde fleet.

Indeed, more parts of the supersonic aircraft were manufactured at Brooklands than any other plant in Britain or France.

Having learned they were

to have Delta Golf, the museum's first task was to work out how to get it to Surrey from its resting place in Filton.

They recruited Hampshire-based decommissioning specialists Air Salvage International to take charge.

The salvors sliced the old Concorde into three 18-foot wide sections so it could be transported by road and then cut the nose off so it could be removed from the airfield.

'When it arrived, it looked like the world's biggest Airfix kit'

Jeff Want, BA Director

The aircraft was moved to Brooklands during April, May and June of 2004, where it sat in the grounds in pieces while the reconstruction team decided how to approach the project.

Now, two years later, the result of their efforts has been praised as a remarkable achievement by Jeff Want, a director at BA.

He said: "When we saw it arrive here two years ago it looked a bit like the world's biggest Airfix kit.

"We knew it would be difficult, but we had every confidence that Brooklands could rise to the challenge."

Delta Golf, the only Concorde open to the public in the south east of England, is on permanent loan from BA.

Brooklands has spent more than £750,000 on restoring it,

about £125,000 of which has come from public donations.

Alan Winn, director of Brooklands Museum, said: "It was in a terrible mess when we first saw it.

"The amount of work that has gone into it has been phenomenal.

"In commercial terms, it is great to have it back, we're expecting a massive increase in visitor numbers which will be great for business."

Watching the formal unveiling of the exhibit with a special feeling of affection was 81-year-old Peter Baker.

As a BAC test pilot, he was on Delta Golf's first flight back in 1974. He flew it for the last time in 1981.

In total, Mr Baker notched up more than 1,500 hours flying various Concorde including 800 hours on Delta Golf itself.

He said: "This aircraft was a real delight to fly.

"I like the fact that youngsters can come here and see something a bit adventurous and maybe be inspired to do something adventurous themselves."

