Engine start-up procedure

Pre-flight checks are defined in the Flight Crew Operating Manual. The flight engineer will carry out a specific set of actions concerned with the application of ground electrics to the aircraft followed by an external inspection. Each crew member then ‘scans’ his own panel, setting controls and testing as required. When all are ready the co-pilot will read the Before Start Check. During checklist work, ‘C’ = Captain, ‘P’ = Co-pilot, ‘E’ = Flight Engineer and ‘G’ = Ground Engineer.

As a captain I always looked forward to going to work on Concorde. The beauty of it being only a small fleet (seven aircraft in total) was that you nearly always knew other flight members, be they flight or cabin crew. For ten years we flew together as a group until command opportunities for senior co-pilots became available on other fleets. Although it was not planned as such, these were ideal conditions for the introduction of a radically different aircraft like Concorde.

The flight crew met at Tech Block A – known as TBA in those days – and we were driven to the Queen’s Building for briefing, checking fuel flight plan and route and terminal weather. We drove out to the aircraft to meet the ground crew and ground engineers, several of whom we had also got to know. Up the steps on to the flight deck and into my seat – the all-singing all-dancing seat which moved electrically to any position I wanted.

The co-pilot and I began our ‘scan’ checks. We quietly and separately checked everything on our sides of the flight deck, and then we were joined by the flight engineer who, by now, had completed his external checks. The fuel was now on board.

Time permitting I would go into the terminal building to meet the passengers and give them details of the flight – 3 hours 22 minutes to JFK. We also knew some of them who were regular travellers with us. We were all one happy family!