CONCORDE VISITS GANDER

by J.B. Elliott

Gander residents were privileged this year to be among the first Canadians to get a first-hand view of the Supersonic Concorde both in the air and on the ground.

British Airways and Air France have each completed a set of trial flights between Europe and Gander. To date the Concorde has made more than 100 crossings of the Atlantic Ocean in its quest for a certificate of airworthiness.

The most recent set of trial flights conducted by British Airways between London and Gander involved 16 return crossings between August 24 and September 7, 1975. Approximately 1200 passengers were transported together with spare parts and technical personnel. The normal configuration of the Concorde will permit seating for one hundred passengers only. The distance from London to Gander is 2375 miles and the average flight time for the Concorde was 2 hours 23 minutes, or 2 hours 40 minutes from ramp to ramp. The turn-around time, which includes refueling, was reduced to less than one hour and on a few days the aircraft made two return flights. The best time for two return flights was just 14 hours – a record to say the least.

Concorde route-proving program

The fourth production Concorde which is being used during July and August on the British part of the Concorde endurance flying program, the final stage of the test flying before certification for airline service.

Programme d'épreuve d'itinéraire de Concorde

Le quatrième Concorde de série, en service en juillet et en août en vertu de la participation britannique au programme de vols d'endurance au stade final des vols d'essais avant l'homologation pour le service des compagnies aériennes.

Concorde at Gander Airport

Le Concorde à l'aéroport de Gander

The average cruising altitude for these flights was between 50 and 55 thousand feet. Position reports were normally filed at 30°W and 40°W. No significant weather was encountered either at altitude or during the acceleration and/or deceleration phase. Apparently, the design of the Concorde makes it much less susceptible to CAT than conventional aircraft. Flight planning was done by the London Computer and specialized high-level meteorological parameters were not requested from the Gander Weather Office. Routine Trans Atlantic flight documentation only was provided.

It is expected that the Concorde will commence commercial operations in January 1976, with original routes from Europe to the Far East, Australia, Africa and South America. Gander is not likely to see the Concorde again until commercial flights between Europe and North America are approved.