



Six BA Super VC10s in storage at Prestwick – G-ASGA, 'SGD, 'SGH, 'SGI, 'SGJ and 'SGP, seen in early-1981. (Gordon Macadie)

Heathrow, the aircraft having flown the final outbound Super VC10 departure, Manchester to Toronto, the previous day. London-New York weekly flights operated up to 18 October, or when there were insufficient passengers to justify a 747. During September-October 1980, the armed services participated in Exercise CRUSADER. This field training task involved the mass reinforcement of NATO troops in Germany, and required significant air transport resources. Supplementing the RAF's VC10s and Hercules, BA aircraft took part, including the 747, TriStar and Super VC10, some of those stored at Prestwick temporarily returning to service for the purpose. For example, G-ASGL visited Glasgow on 15 September on a Crusader flight.

March 1981 saw BA's final Super VC10 commercial flights. On the 12th, G-ASGF performed a flypast of Cardiff and the BA Engineering Plant at Treforest. The last scheduled passenger service was on the 29th when the same aircraft arrived back at Heathrow after operating BA064 from Dar es Salaam via Kilimanjaro and Larnaca, commanded by Captain 'Sandy' Saunders. The previous day, G-ASGF flew the last outbound schedule, BA065 London to Dar es Salaam via Larnaca and Blantyre. This left just a few charters to mark the historic farewell to the VC10 in BA service. The first of these were also on the 29 March, featuring G-ASGL, which operated two hour-long enthusiast's flights from London Gatwick, arranged by Ian Allan Travel; the second flight had been put on due to the high demand. With Captain Roger Price in command, together with Senior First Officer Brian Horn and Engineer Officer Herbert Bailey, both were routed via the north-west and the Bristol Channel –

descending for a flypast over Lulsgate airport – before returning via the south coast to Gatwick; the second flight performed a roller landing at Lulsgate and flew briefly at cliff top height along the coast near Minehead.

On Monday, 30 March 1981, the grand 'Farewell Flight of the British Airways Super VC10' took place (BA9050C). The BA brass band played passengers aboard G-ASGL at the Heathrow engineering base. Captain William A Outram was in command, with Senior First Officer P Downing, Senior Flight Engineer W Hughes, Flight Purser G Conway, Steward D Eales plus Stewardesses G Knudsen, M Gunning and S Leet-Cook. Filled to capacity with 137 passengers, including BA staff and invited guests, former VC10 Project Engineer Ernie Marshall at Vickers was amongst several VIPs on board. G-ASGL left the ramp on time at 1230, taking-off 22 minutes later and reached 10,000 ft (3,048 m) at 1256. Routeing was then to Manchester airport, where a landing gear-down slow flypast at 165 mph (266 km/h) along Runway 06 took place at 1325, proceeding thence to Prestwick airport. Here, another landing gear-down slow fly-by was made, at 160 mph (257 km/h), very low along Runway 31 at 1357, before turning-back over Prestwick Bay and 'cleaning-up' for a very exhilarating fast pass along Runway 13 at 1401. These runs gave passengers good views of most of the rest of the BA Super VC10 fleet in open store at the Scottish airport. Following this excitement, a climb to 25,000 ft (7,620 m) was made as the aircraft headed south, the more sedate cruise interlude allowing a Champagne lunch to be served, including fresh Salmon. A descent to 8,000 ft (2,438 m) over South Wales followed, reached at 1434, thence another low flypast,

## BA VC10 FLEET

### Standard VC10 Type 1101

805	G-ARVB	Apr-Jly 74 [4]
806	G-ARVC	Apr-Jly 74 [2] <sup>1</sup>
807	G-ARVE	Apr-Oct 74 [5]
808	G-ARVF	Apr-Jly 74 [3] <sup>2</sup>
809	G-ARVG	Apr-Jun 74 [1] <sup>3</sup>
810	G-ARVH	Apr-Oct 74 [6]
812	G-ARVJ	Apr 74-Jly 81 [9] <sup>4</sup>
813	G-ARVK	Apr 74-Jun 75 [7] <sup>5</sup>
815	G-ARVM	Apr 74-Oct 79 [8]

### Super VC10 Type 1151

851	G-ASGA	Apr 74-by Dec 80 [13]
852	G-ASGB	Apr 74-Oct 80 [10]
853	G-ASGC	Apr 74-Oct 79 [1]
854	G-ASGD	Apr 74-Apr 80 [4]
855	G-ASGE	Apr 74-May 80 [7]
856	G-ASGF	Apr 74-Mar 81 [14]
857	G-ASGG	Apr 74-Dec 80 [12]
858	G-ASGH	Apr 74-Apr 80 [5]
859	G-ASGI	Apr 74-Apr 80 [2]
860	G-ASGJ	Apr 74-Apr 80 [3]
861	G-ASGK	Apr 74-Dec 80 [11]
862	G-ASGL	Apr 74-Mar 81 [15]
863	G-ASGM	Apr 74-May 80 [8]
866	G-ASGP	Apr 74-Oct 80 [9]
867	G-ASGR	Apr 74-May 80 [6]

All above aircraft in service on transfer from BOAC

1 Apr 74

[ ] Order of final withdrawal from BA service

<sup>1</sup> To Gulf Air, later A4O-VC

<sup>2</sup> To United Arab Emirates

<sup>3</sup> To Gulf Air, later A4O-VG

<sup>4</sup> Leased to Ruler of Qatar Oct 75-Jly 81

<sup>5</sup> To Gulf Air, later A4O-VK



Above: VC10 K.2 ZA142 'C' at Nellis AFB, Nevada, with 617 Sqn Tornado ZA375 'Aj:W' glimpsed in the right background, which the VC10 had just refuelled across the Atlantic, both aircraft having the honour of being present in the static display at the USAF 50th anniversary Golden Air Tattoo at the base on 25-26 April 1997. (Author's Collection)

Right: VC10 K.3 ZA149 'H' AAR trials with Typhoon DA2 ZH588 over the Irish Sea, January 1998. (Crown Copyright/MoD)

Below right: VC10 K.4 ZD241 'N' AAR trials with a SAAB JAS 39 Gripen over the Irish Sea, November 1998. (BAe)



support to Tornado and US aircraft strikes on Iraqi air defence targets as part of the American-led Operation DESERT FOX.

On 31 March 1999, 101 Sqn returned to major operations when four VC10Ks were deployed to RAF Bruggen to provide AAR support to Tornado night bombing missions to Kosovo as part of Operation ENGADINE. The first took place overnight, on 4-5 April, six Tornados attacking bridges and tunnels on the main supply routes between Kosovo and Serbia, accompanied by three VC10Ks there and back during the seven-hour sortie. In the last week of April, the Tornados detached forward to Corsica and by 1 June 101 had five VC10Ks and eight aircrews at Ancona, Italy, where they joined TriStars of 216 Sqn supporting NATO and US Navy aircraft engaged in the campaign, now under its NATO name Operation ALLIED FORCE. At the end of the operation on 20 June, 101 had flown 95 operational sorties. The last VC10 returned to Brize Norton on 25 June 1999. 10 Sqn had provided air transport support to Allied Force, and by the end of 1999, ongoing sorties to Pristina, Skopje and Split in the former Yugoslavia took up a significant part of its workload.

In September 1999, 10 Sqn participated in the FPDA Exercise STARDEX. Initially based at Kuantan, Malaysia, it later moved to Paya Lebar, Singapore. Upon successful conclusion of this commitment, the VC10



VC10 A4O-VL in Gulf Air 'Golden Falcon' colours with Air Ceylon leasing titles in the Heathrow maintenance area near the end of its civil airline service, 28 March 1978. (Keith Gaskell)

## Chapter 7

# CIVIL OPERATORS

### Air Ceylon

Colombo, Ceylon (Sri Lanka from 1972)

Air Ceylon was the national airline of the country, formed in 1947. Operations commenced that December with DC-3s, with international services added in 1949 using DC-4s. BOAC Comet 4s were wet leased from March 1962 for the London-Colombo-Singapore flights. These were replaced on 1 October 1965 by wet leased BOAC Standard VC10s operating the following weekly services: London-Rome-Karachi-Colombo (Flight Nos AE118 out/AE117 return) thence Colombo-Kuala Lumpur-Singapore (AE116 out/AE115 return). Early examples of aircraft on these flights were G-ARVK on 2 November

(AE118) and G-ARVM on 10 November 1965 (AE117). Super VC10s saw occasional use from June 1967 – the first recorded arrivals at Heathrow on AE117 being G-ASGI (3 June 1967) and G-ASGC (24 June, 1 and 8 July). Whilst First Class passengers were normally served by BOAC cabin crew, the Economy Class section usually had a combination of Air Ceylon and BOAC staff. The mixed use of both VC10 types continued, with Standards predominating, until the leasing arrangement ended on 31 March 1972. From the following day, Air Ceylon chartered a UTA DC-8 for these services. However, seven years later, the VC10 returned for several months, from 30 December 1977, when Gulf Air

Standard A4O-VL was leased by Air Ceylon, albeit flown by British Airways (BA) crews. This continued until 31 March 1978 when Air Ceylon ceased operating. It was succeeded by new carrier Air Lanka in January 1979.

### Air-India

Bombay (renamed Mumbai 1995), India

Air-India's origins go back to the small Tata Air Lines, formed in 1932. On 29 July 1946, Tata became Air-India, with international services commencing in April 1948 using Lockheed Constellations. Though Air-India evaluated the VC10, Boeing 707s were bought instead and introduced on its services in April 1960. However, from 1 April 1965, the airline wet leased BOAC Standard VC10s for its weekly Bombay-Bahrain-Kuwait flights (AI801/AI802). The aircraft were taken-over at Kuwait after arrival from London, operating to Bombay and return. Examples of aircraft used, from the logbooks of the late Captain F G Secker (BOAC):

7 Jun 65 – G-ARVF; 28 Jun 65 – G-ARVM; 14 Jan 66 – G-ARVB; 5 Aug 66 – G-ARVI (all AI802) and 10 Dec 66 – G-ARVA (AI801).



VC10 G-ARVH in BOAC 'Golden Speedbird' original livery with Air Ceylon leasing stickers. (Adrian Balch Collection)



VC10 C.1 XV105 is rolled-out of the BEA maintenance hangar at Heathrow on 3 July 1972 following repaint, all 13 VC10 C.1s being so-treated by the airline here between February 1972 and June 1974. (Author's Collection)

cabin freight door, MoA contract no KU/C/11/CB.10(d). RAF Serial No **XV105** allocated 24 Aug 65. F/F 3 Oct 67, from Weybridge to Wisley. Del 20 Oct 67 to 10 Sqn, RAF Brize Norton. Named 'Albert Ball VC' at RAF Brize Norton, Nov 68. Weather diversion from Brize Norton to Prestwick, 17 Oct 69 (with XR808). Allocated 29 Jan-13 Mar 75 to BAC Filton, believed tailplane work. Returned survivors from the attacks on the vessels *Sir Galahad* and *Sir Tristram* during the Falklands conflict from Wideawake via Dakar to Brize Norton, 24 Jun 82. Allocated 25-27 Oct 82 and 21-26 Nov 84 to A&AEE Boscombe Down, unknown CA Release trials. Participated in RAF Shawbury 'end of course' display, 6 Dec 84. Operated annual 'Aries' polar navigation flight from Brize Norton, 1 Jun 87. First aircraft to visit new 'Twin Peaks' VC10 Major maintenance hangar at RAF St Athan, for demonstration purposes, 18 Aug 92. Ferried 12 Sep 94 to FRA, Hurn (RRR847). Cvt'd to Standard VC10 Type 1180 C.1K AART under MoD(PE) contract no A3A/300 extension, announced 19 Feb 92, with BAe Manchester, work sub-contracted to FRA, Hurn. F/F 12 Apr 95 as a VC10 C.1K. Del 24 Apr 95, from Hurn to 10 Sqn, RAF Brize Norton (C.1K Set 9). Visited Split, Croatia, 1 Feb 96, on a trooping flight. Attended SBAC Farnborough airshow, 19-25 Jly 04, as part of 'Rolls-Royce Centenary Park' static display (XV105 arr 23 Jly 04; dep 26 Jly 04). Tfr'd 14 Oct 05 to 101 Sqn, RAF Brize Norton, upon 10 Sqn disbandment same day. 101 Sqn aircraft code letter 'V' applied, Feb 06. Special tail art to celebrate 101 Sqn's 90th anniversary unveiled 16 Jun 07 at the RAF Brize Norton Families Day. Special flight conveying 101 Sqn veterans, on the exact 90th anniversary date of the Squadron's formation, 12 Jly 07. Repainted with grey tail at Filton, 27-29 Aug 08, unit code letter 'V' re-applied after arrival back at Brize Norton. Visited Warton, 13 May 10, on preparatory work for BAe Systems VC10 trials (using K.3 ZA149 in Jun 10). Visited Paderborn, Germany, 3 Oct 10. WFS and final flight 30 Aug 11, ferried from Brize Norton to Bruntingthorpe via overshoot at Wittering, for spares recovery by GJD Services; postponed from 26 Aug 11 due to adverse weather. B/U, completed 23 May 12.

TT 38,272 hrs

**C/N 836** Standard VC10 Type 1106 RAF C.1 later cvtd to Standard VC10 Type 1180 RAF C.1K

Weybridge Works Order No 7A

**XV106**

**STATUS:** Nose section preserved at the Avro Heritage Museum, Woodford; centre upper fuselage (cabin) preserved at the SWAM, St Athan; other artefacts preserved

Order announced 10 Aug 62, RAF 11th Standard VC10 Type 1105; amended 12 Feb 63 to Standard VC10 Type 1106 C.1 incorporating large cabin freight door, MoA contract no KU/C/11/CB.10(d). RAF Serial No **XV106** allocated 24 Aug 65. F/F 17 Nov 67, from Weybridge to Wisley. Del 1 Dec 67 to 10 Sqn, RAF Brize Norton. Named 'Thomas Mottershead VC' at RAF Brize Norton, Nov 68. Allocated 29 Oct-13 Dec 74 to BAC Filton, believed tailplane work. Participated in the static display of over 80 aircraft at HM The Queen's Silver Jubilee Review of the RAF at Finningley, 29 Jly 77, and in the public event the following day, 30 Jly 77. Visited Lasham, 15 Jly 80. Flew via Ascension to Montevideo in Uruguay, 3 Apr 82, to repatriate the ousted Governor of the Falkland Islands, Rex Hunt, and a

contingent of captured Royal Marines, arr Brize Norton 5 Apr 82 (RRR2800). Participated, together with VC10 K.2 ZA144, in the flypast at the RAF 75th Anniversary Royal Review, Marham, 1 Apr 93. Visited DRA Farnborough 5 Feb 92. Ferried 8 Oct 93 to FRA, Hurn. Cvt'd to Standard VC10 Type 1180 C.1K AART under MoD(PE) contract no A3A/300 placed 31 Jan 90 with BAe Manchester, work sub-contracted to FRA, Hurn. F/F 4 May 94 as a VC10 C.1K. Del 9 May 94, from Hurn to RAF St Athan, Major maintenance due (C.1K Set 6), completed 26 Oct 94. 10 Sqn 90th Anniversary Crest formally unveiled on XV106, 18 Apr 05, the first aircraft to be treated. Tfr'd 14 Oct 05 to 101 Sqn, RAF Brize Norton, upon 10 Sqn disbandment same day. 101 Sqn aircraft code letter 'W' applied, Feb 06. Visited Prague 24 Mar 12 with spares for TriStar ZD948. WFS and final flight 7 Nov 12, ferried from Brize Norton to Bruntingthorpe, preceded by two flyovers, for spares recovery by GJD Services. B/U, completed by late-



VC10 C.1 XV106 undergoing conversion to C.1K in the FRA hangar, Hurn. (via Author)



VC10 C.1K XV106 being 'parted-out' at Bruntingthorpe, 16 April 2013; the nose and a section of the centre fuselage were both saved for preservation (see Appendix B). (Andy Martin)