

## **Black Buck Pilot Visits the Southend Vulcan**

2007 marks the 25th Anniversary of the Falklands Conflict and Southend Airport was host to a historic event. The Vulcan bombing raids on Port Stanley, recently made famous through Rowland White's bestselling paperback 'Vulcan 607', are legendary and were, at the time, the longest bombing raids in history. These missions were codenamed 'Black Buck' and the Vulcan pilot on the first raid, Martin Withers, and his Air Electronics Officer, Hugh Prior, visited Southend Airport as guests of the Vulcan Restoration Trust and during the morning of Saturday 6th October, took the controls of Southend's own Vulcan Bomber to carry out a routine engine run. During the afternoon, both men were guests at the Vulcan Restoration Trust's Autumn Members Day at Hawkwell Village Hall where a large audience was given a unique insight into this hair-raising and truly remarkable bombing raid.



Martin Withers in XL426's pilot seat  
(Photos: Phil Whalley)



Hugh Prior relives his role as Air Electronics Officer on the raid

Whilst Southend's Vulcan will not take to the air again, she is in the throes of a deep engineering programme designed to ensure that she is able to continue performing the hugely popular taxi-runs for which she is renowned. This programme of work is expensive and the Vulcan Restoration Trust is in the midst of a major fund-raising campaign entitled '426 RETURN TO POWER' in order to finance the work. Martin's visit attracted a large crowd and since performing the engine run at Southend, he has been up at Bruntingthorpe Airfield, the home of another famous Vulcan XH558 which will return to flight after 14 years in late October; Martin will be one of the display pilots next year when the Vulcan makes its welcome return to the airshow circuit.



XL426 with Martin Withers at the controls comes to life at Southend (Photo Phil Whalley)

VRT Website: [www.avrovulcan.com](http://www.avrovulcan.com)

