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Concorde Lives On, It is Only Sleeping

Mike, perhaps better known from Christina's card shop at Monte Duquesa, is a retired B.A. pilot who flew Concorde during its heyday.

In November 2003 Concorde completed her last flight after three decades of supersonic passenger air travel. It was the end of an era and many still miss that distinctive silhouette but in Surrey a group of former pilots and colleagues are determined to see her fly again.

In Surrey a dedicated group of Concorde devotees formed a Club Concorde in 2006 that already has over 30,000 members many from the 'Save Concorde Group' led by Ross Mallett who is backing the campaign to get Concorde into the air again.

This is not a simple undertaking. The group have set their eyes on three possible aircraft, all of which are overseas and estimate they will need £10 – £12 million to complete the refit depending on which one they choose. They will also need an extra £2 million to fund the management of the project. Not surprisingly the first goal is to attract some heavy investment. President of Club Concorde, Paul James, a former Concorde charterer, says, "Investors will more than recoup their money from the multi national sponsorship deals surrounding the relaunch programme and beyond. The worldwide TV rights alone would exceed the refit costs."

The immediate plan is to resurrect as a private heritage aircraft at least one Concorde within the next three years, in time for the 70th anniversary of the Battle of Britain, September 15th, 2010 when they 'aim to reproduce the famous flight of Concorde and a Battle of Britain Spitfire over the white cliffs of Dover' says Paul.

Concorde is one of the most advanced planes ever built. She was the only commercial airliner to fly at twice the speed of sound (1,360 mph at 55,000 feet). The last 'e' by the way stands for excellence, England, Europe and entente according to former British Technology Minister Anthony Wedgewood Benn. The overall shape, aerodynamics, flight controls, propulsion and auxiliary systems put Concorde a generation ahead of any other form of civil transport.

Perhaps, with typical French flare, the words written on the cockpit door of a French Concorde, says it all, 'Concorde est toujours vivant, il n'est qu'en sommeil' which translated means, 'Concorde lives on, it is only sleeping'.

Concorde facts: Concorde carries 100 passengers. The internal width of the aircraft is 9 feet, she is 202 feet long and stretches a further 10ins at MACH 2. Concorde takes off at 250 mph and lands at 185 mph. At MACH 2 the outside temperature is -65 degrees C and the temperature at the tip of the nose cone is +127 degrees C. There were 20 Concordes of which 14 flew commercially. Brian Trubshaw flew the first British prototype 002 in April 1969 from Filton in Bristol. The last Concorde flight was Alpha Fox which returned home to Filton on the 26th November 2003.

Club Concorde is based at Vine House, 12, Riverside Drive, Esher, Surrey KT10 8PG. Life membership costs £10. For more details visit the website www.clubconcorde.co.uk.

(The photographs are the actual framed prints available from Club Concorde)

