

Vulcan day for dads

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Huge draw - crowds

always flock to Vulcan open days

FAMILIES can climb inside a rare historic war plane at [Southend Airport](#) on Fathers' Day.

The Vulcan Restoration Trust charity will hold an open day for XL426, the 52-year-old Vulcan bomber aircraft, at Southend Airport, on Sunday, June 15.

Visitors will be able to climb inside the cockpit to see where the pilots, navigators and air electronics officer worked, and imagine what it would have been like on a long seven-hour flight.

Trust member and former RAF pilot Joe Marsden, who flew the aircraft between 1973 and 1977, said: "Visitors get to see the aeroplane and talk to the enthusiasts who look after it.

"They can climb inside the aircraft and it's possible to power it up, use the auxiliary engines, operate the air brakes – see, hear and smell it."

More than 500 visitors attended the last open day in April, raising more than £2,000 towards its upkeep.

Trust secretary Richard Clarkson said: "It's not just a fabulous day out, but also a superb way for us to raise much-needed-funds to keep the XL426 in tip top condition."

The plane is one of only three Vulcans in the country that are still able to move, although it can no longer fly.

The Vulcan took over from the wartime Lancaster as the Royal Air Force's long-range bomber. During the Sixties they were armed with nuclear weapons.

The XL426 first took to the skies on August 23, 1962. It served with several squadrons until the early Eighties, when it was used for training as well as for display at airshows.

Mr Marsden said: "It's brilliant. It handles like a 100-tonne fighter."

It was nearly sold to a French businessman in 1986, but when no agreement could be reached, it was purchased by Roy Jacobson who took it to Southend Airport.

When he struggled to pay the parking fees, aviation enthusiasts launched the Vulcan Memorial Flight Supporters Club to save it from being scrapped.

They became the proud new owners in 1993 and by 1995 it was able to move by itself for the first time in nine years.

The open day will run from 10am to 4pm. For more information visit www.avrovulcan.com