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Record breaking Canberra WK163 to be reunited with cockpit

The charity aiming to restore the record-breaking English Electric Canberra WK163 to flight has announced that it will be reunited with its original cockpit following a successful auction bid in America.

The Vulcan to the Sky Trust (VTST), who successfully restored the Avro Vulcan XH558 to flight to enjoy an eight-year extension to its flying career, bought Canberra WK163 in a bid to return this significant aircraft to flight.

Dr Robert Pleming, chief executive of the VTST said: “We are absolutely thrilled to have secured the cockpit for WK163.

“We have been taking advice about the best way to return Canberra WK163 to flight and, whilst our aircraft is mostly in a good condition, the cockpit had sadly been stripped out in a fashion which would make rebuilding it vastly time consuming and costly.

“It became clear some time ago that removing WK163’s cockpit and replacing it with a fully configured version from another aircraft would save hundreds of thousands of pounds.



“So, when we were alerted to the fact that two English Electric Canberra B.6s located at Lampson Field, Lake County, California, were due to be auctioned, we were extremely interested.

“When we discovered that one of the aircraft had the original front section/cockpit from WK163 and other components of value, we knew that securing this would reduce the restoration costs of WK163 significantly. By repatriating the cockpit and reuniting it with the original airframe, we would significantly enhance the heritage value of the asset.

“We are happy to report that the Trust’s final bid won the auction for Canberra WT327 below the Trust’s agreed limit of \$10,000, bringing both a significant technical benefit and a very fortuitous heritage provenance benefit.”

The restoration to flight of WK163 forms an important part of the VTST’s vision for the future in accordance with their charitable objects: to preserve and present the last airworthy Vulcan, XH558 and other heritage aircraft.

Ken Smart CBE, one of VTST’s Trustees and formerly Chief Inspector of Air Accidents at the AAIB, commented: “When I was working with Canberras at the Royal Radar Establishment airfield at Pershore in the 1960s and 70s, it was our practice to reconfigure the aircraft to meet the needs of the scientists’ radar trials projects. The Canberra was ideally suited to this work because it had transport joints just aft of the cockpit and just aft of the bomb bay. Noses were regularly removed, modified and fitted to other aircraft in the fleet.”

Dr Pleming added: “We have been very lucky to have found out about and subsequently purchase WT327. This is a significant milestone on the road to restoring WK163 to flight, and to bringing a famous jet heritage aircraft type back to flying displays in the UK.”

The Vulcan to the Sky Trust (VTST) is currently in negotiation to secure a mortgage of up to £2.4 million to enable it to build a hangar at Doncaster Sheffield Airport. The support of the public is needed to meet the £4million costs of the build, which will result in Vulcan XH558, ‘*The Spirit of Great Britain*’, being protected from the elements and once again available to the public. The Vulcan Experience hangar will also be home to Canberra WK163 when restored, providing a facility to present two of Britain’s most important and leading-edge heritage aircraft to the British public.

For further information, visit www.vulcantothesky.org

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