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Matthew Kelly stars in

TWELFTH NIGHT

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Concorde coup plots future for museum

Alan Winn is perfectly qualified to be director of Weybridge's Brooklands Museum and its motor racing and aviation heritage. As he tells PAUL FLECKNEY, he has a background in amateur racing and a unique Concorde experience to his name.

Have you ever jet-setted to New York and back on the same day, purely for "a quick lunch appointment"? That's exactly what Alan Winn did back in 1998, during his tenure at Flight International magazine, the aviation industry publication of which he was previously an editor.

Unsurprisingly Alan recalls it with vivid detail: "It was an amazing experience. Not only are you so high up that the sky is almost pitch black, but you can actually see the curvature of the earth through the clouds over the Atlantic. The windows get hot and, strangely, there's this deathly silence as Concorde is so slippery, there's no wind noise."

And some of the magic of Concorde will be - wait for it - winging its way back to the public after the jet was taken out of service in 2003. Brooklands beat off stiff competition from organisations across the world to gain a permanent loan from British Airways in 2003, and since then it has been meticulously restored to its former glory.

Winn's privileged trip puts him in a unique position when trying to replicate the Concorde experience: "It allows me to focus on what exactly was so special, but it really is a vision shared by many at the museum. Concorde still has an air of elitism and we don't want to disappoint people by only letting them walk down the aisle but touch nothing."

Alan, who is 55 and lives in Tadworth, describes what the public can expect: "We want them to be able to experience

what it was like, as closely as possible to be real thing. They will get boarding passes, sit in their own seat and get a glass of champagne, really get involved." Further in the future a Concorde cockpit simulator will even allow the public to try their hand at 'flying' at twice the speed of sound.

Brooklands' mantle as the birthplace of British racing is undeniable, and whereas Winn's own racing achievements are less prestigious, he remains unnecessarily modest. He has raced as far afield as New Zealand, where he scooped second-in-class at an International Rally as a co-driver in a Rally Mini.

The majority of his racing was in the 1970s behind the wheels of vintage machines such as Rileys and Triumphs, and even a 1914 Renault. Winn has to be somewhat coy about revealing a second place he attained at another bastion of motor racing, Silverstone. He still races Bentleys and has his own 1929 3-litre model.

Either by luck or judgement, he has never crashed or badly damaged any of the cars he has raced.

And it is with equally safe hands that Winn is forging a future at Brooklands Museum that can finally push the facility out from the shadow of its formidable past.



Supersonic man: Alan Winn, the director of Brooklands Museum, with the newly purchased Concorde that is being restored.

The general public should be able to experience the real thrill of flying on the great plane once the new attraction opens.