Blackburn Buccaneer (XV350)

Originally conceived in 1952 in response to a Naval Aircraft requirement (NA 39), the Blackburn Buccaneer was developed as a low level nuclear strike aircraft for use from the fleet's aircraft carriers. Blackburn secured the initial order in 1955 and work commenced for the development of 20 aircraft. One of the primary requirements was that the Buccaneer should be able to operate in a radius of 460 miles with a full weapon load.

One of the major innovations in the design was the use of the American pioneered boundary layer blowing system which enable the aircraft to gain maximum lift from wings which had to be kept small for stowage on aircraft carriers. The first unit to form was No.700Z Squadron based at Lossiemouth and this was quickly followed by the first operational squadron, No.801 which embarked on HMS Ark Royal in early 1963. These Buccaneers were painted in the anti-nuclear flash white, similar to the then 'V' bomber force.

At this time an uprated development of the Buccaneer was progressing which had a significant increase in the radius of operation with the fitting of new engines – the Rolls Royce Spey. The first S.Mk.2 flew in May 1963 and the uprated Buccaneer went operational with No.700B Squadron in June 1964.


Courtesy of the Lincolnshire Echo

From the mid-sixties, the Buccaneer along with the F-4K Phantom became something of a TV personality thanks to the BBC documentary 'Sailing' which featured the Ark on her final world voyage.

The aircraft then entered a new phase in it's extraordinary life. The RAF had been promised the TSR2 and then the US built F11 for the low strike role, but both were subsequently cancelled. This left them with one option – the Buccaneer. However, a turn in the Buccaneer's popularity came when ten aircraft from 208 Squadron flew out to Nellis Air Base in Nevada to compete against the US Air Force in the legendary 'Red Flag' deployment. It astounded American fighter crews, out-flying every USAF unit in the exercise.

Later in it's career, twelve Buccaneers were deployed in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, to take part in Operation Desert Storm, operating as low-level laser designators for Tornado strike aircraft.

Specifications

Dimensions:

Length: 19.33m (63ft 5in)

Wingspan: 13.41m (44ft)

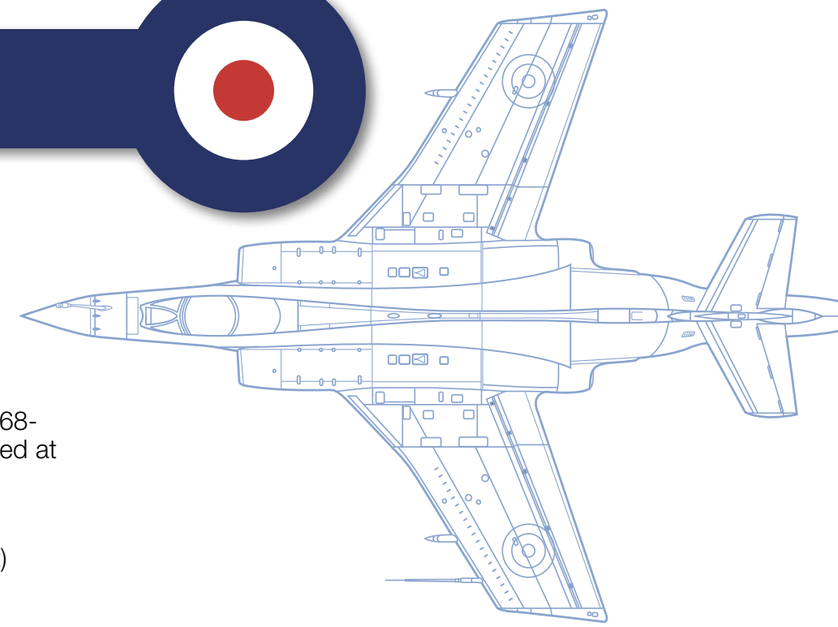
Height: 4.95m (16ft 3in)

Powerplant: Two Rolls Royce RB.168-1A Spey Mk.101 turbofans each rated at 11,030lb thrust

Maximum Speed: 691 mph

Service Ceiling: 12,200m (40,000ft)

Range: 3701km (2,300 miles)



The Aeropark Buccaneer

The aircraft first flew from Holme on Spalding Moor in 1967. It was delivered to the Royal Navy in September of that year and was transferred to the RAF on January 1st 1969. However, the aircraft never operated in RAF squadron service and was brought up to Martel capability in February 1969 and issued to 'A' Squadron at the Armament Experimental Establishment (A&AEE) at Boscombe Down. The Buccaneer was initially used for fin service trials and the development of the 'Matra' rocket pods for the RAF. In July 1973, the aircraft was detached to Edwards Air Force Base, California, and was used as a trials aircraft for a number of years. In 1980 she was detached to Elgin Air Force Base, Florida, again for trials.

XV350 returned back to A&AEE in December 1981 and began trials of the Laser designate 'Pave' system that was to prove so effective in the precision bombing operations in the 1991 Gulf War. The aircraft the transferred to Hatfield to commence trials for Sea Eagle missions. In 1985 the aircraft became the fourth Buccaneer to receive the new ASR 1012 uploaded Avionics package and in 1988 she operated at BAe Scampton for pre-service trials.

Finally, XV350 was withdrawn from service on the 28th April 1993. The AVA purchased her from RAF Shawbury and it was moved by road to the Aeropark.

Special thanks to Mr. N. lambden, Lindway Motor Services of Coalville who provided the vehicle to transport the aircraft to the Aeropark.

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