

## *The Buccaneers*

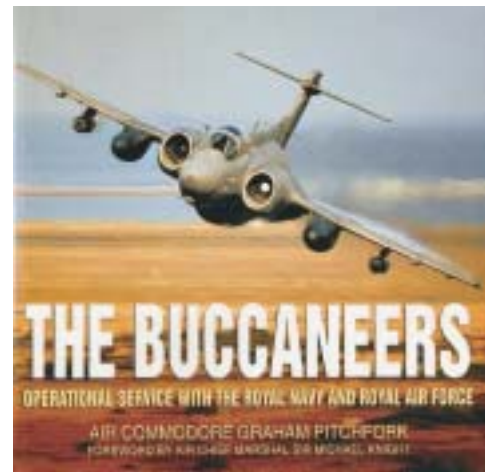
*Operational service with the Royal Navy  
and the Royal Air Force*

*by Air Commodore Graham Pitchfork RAF (Retd)*

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### **Reviewed by Group Captain Chris Finn**

Graham Pitchfork's new book on the Buccaneer is markedly different, both in size and content, from previous works on the subject, describing the over 30 years' operational history of the aircraft from both chronological and thematic viewpoints. The book starts with the early history of the development of the Buccaneer and then covers carrier operations, including the transition to the Spey-engined Mk 2 aircraft. The next chapter covers the Buccaneer's entry into RAF service including the use of the accident-prone Mk 1 as an interim conversion aircraft pending the delivery of new Mk 2b aircraft to the RAF. The chapter on training places considerable weight, quite rightly, on the development of the fore-runner to all the QWI courses now undertaken across the RAF's current fast-jet force. He then looks at the two different roles of the aircraft, maritime and overland, and the differing nature of operations from Honington and Laarbruch. Finally the book describes the Buccaneer's service in the Lossiemouth Maritime Wing, in its only operational service in the Gulf War and then in its final days.

An experienced Buccaneer navigator who served with both the Fleet Air Arm and the Royal Air Force, Graham's experience of the aircraft as an instructor, flight commander and squadron commander has enabled him to highlight both the high and the low points of the aircraft's 30 years of frontline service. This comprehensive and well-researched history of the Buccaneer is as much the story of the men who flew her as the development of the aircraft itself. The book is replete with photographs of the Buccaneer in all its operational roles, many of which are previously unpublished. But it is the well-chosen anecdotes which bring an authoritative and personal flavour to the book and make it, as Sir Michael Knight says in his foreword, 'a thoroughly readable work'.

At one level then, this is a comprehensive and interesting history of an aircraft which the Royal Air Force never really wanted yet which, in its twilight years, made an outstanding contribution to the Royal Air Force's efforts in the Gulf War. At another level, however, it is the story of the men who flew the Buccaneer and their irreverent but highly professional approach to life. Every Force claims to be unique and far better than its technologically cosseted successors, but Graham Pitchfork's book is compelling evidence that the Buccaneer Force's claim to that is more justified than most.

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