

DARK BLUE JETS

PROCURING FLEET AIR ARM STRIKE FIGHTERS 1945-60

Digging deep into the archives **PROFESSOR KEITH HAYWARD FRAeS** uses official papers and contemporary documents to take a look at the political wrangling between the Royal Navy, government departments and aircraft manufacturers during the procurement of the Fleet Air Arm's "big three" post-war jet fighters; Scimitar, Sea Vixen and Buccaneer

THE ROYAL NAVY'S Fleet Air Arm (FAA) was, to this author's mind, something of a "Cinderella" in terms of the fixed-wing aircraft it operated during the 1950s.¹ Thanks to government policy, the FAA was slow to be equipped with modern jets in the fleet-defence and strike roles; and, once it was, with one exception, these were still behind the state of the art set by American aircraft. All were late into service and far more expensive than first estimated; and the best of the three was nearly cancelled as part of Defence Minister Duncan Sandys' infamous

1957 Defence White Paper. This is the political and industrial history of the procurement of the Supermarine Scimitar, de Havilland Sea Vixen and Blackburn Buccaneer.

MAKE DO AND MEND

At the end of the Second World War both the FAA and RAF were expected largely to rely on existing stocks of aircraft. As an Admiralty official reported to the Treasury in April 1946: "On the ending of the war, we naturally possessed considerably more operational aircraft than were required for the reduced commitments of peacetime".



MIKE HOOKS

A remarkable show of naval air power at the Fleet Air Arm 50th Anniversary Air Day at RNAS Yeovilton on May 28, 1964, including neatly arranged rows of, from left to right, Blackburn Buccaneer S.1s, de Havilland Sea Vixen FAW.1s, Supermarine Scimitar F.1s and Fairey Gannet AEW.3s.