You are looking at the remaining front section of XV352 an example of the *awesome* Blackburn Buccaneer S.2B strike aircraft and an actual Gulf War veteran. The Buccaneer was in its element operating at 100-foot altitude and on one occasion is reputed to have damaged the overhead cables of the local Nevada telephone company while participating in Red Flag with the USAF!

Here the well-preserved cockpit of XV352 can be inspected from the stepped platform on the right-hand side. The museum also displays XV864 with its complete airframe intact, parked in the external area at the back of the museum.

*The Buccaneer acquired the nickname of the “banana aeroplane”, it was fitted with a Blue Parot and was originally intended to carry a Green Cheese!*

Naval Staff Requirement NA.39 of 1952 called for a low-level attack aircraft with high subsonic speed and medium range to counter the Sverdlov class cruiser recently introduced by the Soviet Navy. The Blackburn aircraft company responded with project B-103 designed under the leadership of Barry P Laight and accepted by the War Office in 1955. To preserve secrecy, the B-103 was referred to as the “Blackburn Advanced Naval Aircraft” or BANA plane, hence the nickname.

The design of the Buccaneer utilised the Area Rule technique which gave rise to the curvy airframe in combination with short stubby wings optimised for stable high-speed flight at low altitude. The drawback of short wings was reduced lift so the design incorporated Boundary Layer Control whereby bleed air from the engines could be vented over the aerodynamic surfaces to provide extra lift during take-off and landing. Another special feature of the design was the rotating bomb bay door which enabled bomb drop to be achieved while minimising disturbance to low-level flight; it is interesting to note that the latest F-35 Lightning has the same feature to assist with stealth capability.

Beneath the nose cone is a Ferranti Blue Parot radar for location of the Sverdlov cruisers in the original naval strike role, but which continued to serve the RAF variant in the later period of this aircraft’s career. The intended means to prosecute a Sverdlov was by means of a nuclear tipped missile known as Green Cheese but this weapon never came off the drawing board and instead a free-fall nuclear bomb could be carried in place.

The Buccaneer entered service with the Royal Navy in 1963 and served aboard the RN’s big carriers including HMS Hermes and Ark Royal until 1978. They took part in the famous bombing of the Torrey Canyon wreck off the coast of Cornwall in 1967 to burn off the tanker’s oil spill.

XV352 is an example of a Buccaneer built specifically for the RAF and delivered in 1968. Air Ministry Operational Requirement OR.339 for a long range, supersonic light bomber proposed in 1958 led to rejection of the Blackburn design in favour of the TSR-2 and following that project’s failure the American F-111 was preferred. When the later purchase was cancelled by the UK government in 1968 the RAF reluctantly turned at last to the Buccaneer. However, it was to become a solid success and was admired by the USAF because of participation in their Red Flag air warfare exercises over the Nevada desert from 1975.

When the First Gulf War broke out in 1991 the Buccaneer squadrons were immediately called to arms and XV352 was forward deployed to the Middle East. Buccaneers were fitted with the Pave Spike laser designator and had the primary role of target illumination for Tornados with their Paveway laser guided bombs. In addition, Buccaneers regularly carried their own bomb load which could be dropped on targets-of-opportunity following completion of the primary mission. The Buccaneers flew 218 missions during the First Gulf War.

The last Buccaneer was retired from RAF service in 1994 having been superseded by the Panavia Tornado. The only other purchaser of the Buccaneer had been the South African Airforce where 16 aircraft were operated between 1965 and 1991. They were actively involved in the South African Border Wars of the 1970s and 1980s.