

CANADA AVIATION MUSEUM AIRCRAFT

AIRCRAFT CARRIERS ROYAL CANADIAN NAVY (RCN)



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Introduction

Naval Aviation had its start only eight years after the Wright Brothers first flew their "Flyer" at Kill Devil Hill, Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, USA, in 1903 and less than two years after J.A.D. McCurdy made the first airplane flight at Baddeck, on Bras D'Or Lake, Nova Scotia. It was in 1911 that Eugene Ely, an exhibition pilot, flew a Curtiss off the deck of the United States Ship (USS) BIRMINGHAM at anchor in Hampton Roads, Virginia, and flew it to Norfolk. Two months later he flew from Camp Selfridge to a 120 foot wooden deck fitted on the USS PENNSYLVANIA anchored in San Francisco Bay, proving the feasibility of the aircraft carrier.

It would not be many years before the fledgling country of Canada was to participate in carrier based aviation, initially through the pilots who flew with the Royal Navy (RN) and latterly through the acquisition of aircraft carriers themselves. This story is a synopsis of that participation.

Aircraft Carrier Development

In the formative era of aircraft carrier development navies were tied to the concept that the bigger the ship and the larger the guns the more capable the navy. The bireme and trireme, referring to the numbers and layers of oars used in Greek and Roman galleons, gave way to the wooden hulls and big guns of later ships used in the Napoleonic Wars, and the battles of the Nile and Trafalgar. The Royal Navy (RN) Ship, HMS VICTORY, at Portsmouth, England and the USS CONSTITUTION at Boston, Massachusetts are examples of the wooden ship era.

The end of the era of large displacement vessels with large bore guns as primary weapons was the Battle of Jutland in 1915 and the sinking of the German Battleship BISMARCK in 1941. In the latter battle, carrier borne aircraft proved to be the deciding factor when Navy SWORDFISH aircraft crippled the BISMARCK's steering gear allowing surface vessels to subsequently sink her. Then, later that year, the Japanese Navy proved the value of the carrier when their aircraft all but destroyed the United States (USN) Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbour in the Hawaiian Islands on December 7, 1941.

According to Richard Humble's "Aircraft Carriers" a carrier is an ocean going, self propelled, self sufficient airstrip and servicing base. Carriers make it possible to win battles and they make an invaluable anti-submarine weapon as no other ship can cover so much ocean in such a short time in that role. Carrier aircraft can strike ashore at inland targets and provide cover for amphibious landings. For, versatility and hitting power, the aircraft carrier has never been surpassed by any other warship type.

Early Canadian Participation in Aircraft Carrier Operations

The RCN had considered the possibility of obtaining several small coastal aircraft carriers during the mid 1930's but financial considerations during the depression years saw the idea soon discarded. But when WW II started many young Canadians wanted to serve as Naval Aviators as their predecessors had done during the World War I when they served with the fledgling Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS).

Since the RCN had no Naval Air Service at the start of World War II, Canadian volunteers joined the RN Fleet Air Arm (FAA) as members of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve (RNVR) or the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve (RCNVR). These Canadians made a great contribution and of two Victoria Crosses (VC) awarded to Canadians in WW II, one was awarded posthumously to Lieutenant Robert Hampton GRAY, VC, DSC, RCNVR.

In early years, aircraft carriers were not "purpose built", but were modified ships using hulls originally designed and built for other sea going tasks. During WW II the RCN operated two escort carriers of this type for the Royal Navy: HMS NABOB (ex-USS EDISTO) and HMS PUNCHER (ex-USS WILLAPA).

During the 1930/40 era major navies ie, Great Britain, United States and Japan designed and built carriers on "purpose built" hulls called Fleet (CV) and Light Fleet (CVL) Carriers. In the years after WW II the RCN operated three CVL's, His Majesties Canadian Ship (HMCS) WARRIOR and HMCS MAGNIFICENT on loan from the RN and, the sole Canadian owned ship, HMCS BONAVENTURE which sailed under RCN colors from 1957 to 1970.

Significantly, no Canadian aircrews were to be associated with the the first aircraft carriers with which the RCN was to be closely associated: HMS NABOB and HMS PUNCHER. Their acquisition was probably motivated by the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour in December 1941 which had caused the USN to move units of the Atlantic Fleet to the Pacific Ocean. This exposed allied merchant ships in the Atlantic and European waters to attacks from German submarines. This was aggravated during 1942 and early 1943 because the Royal Air Force (RAF) and the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) were limited in the amount of support available for naval convoys.

This was attributable to:

- (a) insufficient numbers of aircraft;
- (b) inadequate airborne endurance to cover convoys in the 1500 mile ocean area South and East of Iceland;
- (c) no air bases which could cover the middle of the Atlantic; and
- (d) limitations imposed by weather conditions at home bases.

The RCN Contribution to Royal Navy Aircraft Carriers from 1943

The RN were loaned a number of converted USN auxiliary carriers provided under WW II USA/UK Lend Lease agreement. Since the RN suffered an acute shortage of manpower the RCN agreed to partially man two of these American built converted merchant ships supplied to the RN under that lend-lease arrangement.

The Captain, Officers and Ship's Company including the Flight Deck, Ship's Engineering, Electrical and Supply Departments were provided by the RCN. The RN provided the aircrew, air engineering and aircraft maintenance personnel. The ships belonged to the RN and materially were supported by the RN but except for their primary purpose which was to support aviation operations, were under the control of an RCN Captain and crew.

Teething Problems

A major problem soon emerged with this split RCN/RN crew arrangement. Pay for the RN people was at RN rates which were lower than pay for their fellow sailors in the RCN. Food for all ranks was to RN standards, which was lower than the standard Canadian shipboard fare. Amenities put into the ships, which were built to USN specifications, such as ice-cream machines and a laundry room were ordered removed by the RN. One British Admiral said that all a sailor needed to do his laundry was a bucket and a toilet bowl plunger. In short, within the same vessel there existed two standards inevitably leading to cleavages and discontent.

The Captain of HMS NABOB, Captain Horatio Nelson Lay, RCN had done much of the planning for the the RCN's participation in naval air operations including the possible acquisition of carriers and the forming of a Naval Air Branch. He provided the necessary leadership to resolve the NABOB's problems concerning food standards and the wide variation between rates of pay for the RN and RCN ship's company. He pursued the issue of improving the RN amenities in the carrier so that they met RCN

standards. The Captain was successful in resolving the remaining issues except the issue of pay. The RN pay rates which were lower than those of the Canadians , on board the ships, were never resolved.

The First Two Aircraft Carriers HMS NABOB and HMS PUNCHER

Both the HMS NABOB and HMS PUNCHER were built by Seattle Tacoma Shipbuilding, located in Tacoma, Washington, USA. HMS NABOB was the slightly larger vessel at 15,390 tons with an overall length 495 feet and a flight deck width of 107 feet. HMS PUNCHER had a displacement of 14,170 tons and an overall length of 492 feet and a flight deck width of 102 feet. Some reference materials identified both vessels as SMITER Class carriers. In reality they were in slightly different classes.

Though originally planned by the RN to be convoy escorts the ships were in fact employed elsewhere. Since the first priority of any military ship, after her acceptance, is to be “worked-up”, HMS NABOB began this activity in January 1944. Working-up a ship requires that every member of the ship’s crew learn to co-operate with his fellow sailors. This is necessary to ensure that his department, be it engineering, gunnery, upper deck or supply learns to work as a team. This ensures that the ship can meet its commitments and survive in combat operations.

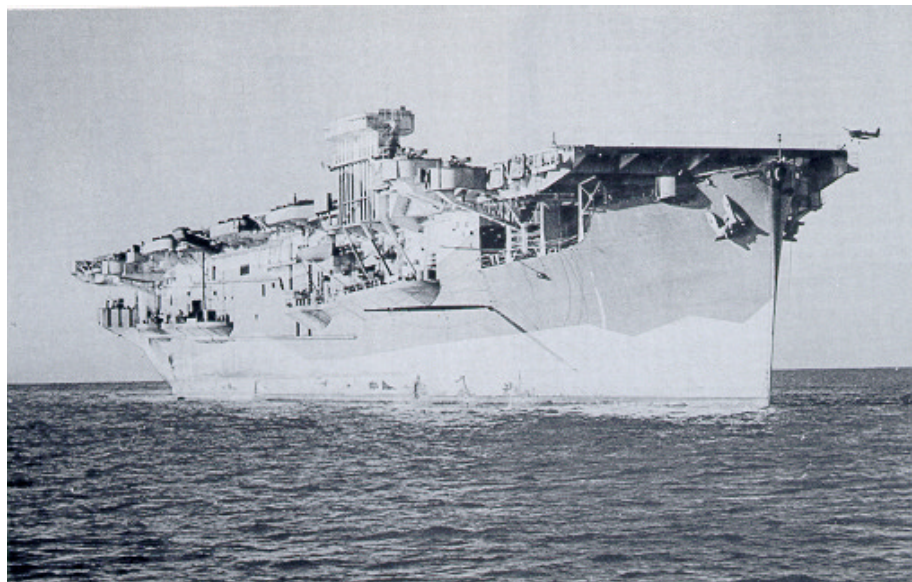
Of primary value in an aircraft carrier is the air department . It must be top line including its flight deck component which is responsible for ensuring that aircraft are launched (take-offs) and recovered (landings) with utmost efficiency. In due course, HMS NABOB was to develop a first class air department. With its air squadron embarked, HMS NABOB was to sail with a ships company consisting of 500 RCN, 327 RN, and 9 Royal New Zealand Navy (RNZN) personnel aboard.

HMS NABOB D77, 7 September 1943 – 30 September 1944

Operations - 1944

HMS NABOB commenced life in an inauspicious manner. Shortly after “work-ups” on the West Coast in January 1944 the ship went aground and had to enter dry-dock at Vancouver where no damage was discovered. The ship then sailed south to San Diego where she embarked a RN Squadron of Grumman AVENGERs (825 Squadron). The aircraft carrier sailing in company with the frigate HMCS NEW WATERFORD, K321, proceeded to the Panama Canal where she embarked 45 US Army Air Force (USAAF), North American P-51 MUSTANG fighters and passengers at Norfolk, Virginia (VA). The carrier sailed for the United Kingdom (UK) in convoy VT-10 but, was non-effective because of her deckload of aircraft.

After disembarking the fighter aircraft and passengers HMS NABOB joined the Home Fleet under the direct command of the Rear Admiral, First Cruiser Squadron. Because the enemy was obtaining considerable protection by using Norwegian fiords and channels between the coast and islands, it was decided to mine these areas using the escort carriers HMS NABOB and HMS TRUMPETER.



AVENGER aircraft were to be the delivery vehicles. A fleet carrier, HMS INDEFATIGABLE launched SEAFIREs, HELLCATSs and FIREFLY's in support of the AVENGER aircraft. The operations were conducted under the codename "OFFSPRING".

Even though the Germans were caught unaware they put up a serious fight and several aircraft were lost: one Grumman AVENGER from HMS TRUMPETER and four from the HMS INDEFATIGABLE. "Operation OFF SPRING" was the largest Royal Navy mining operation of the war and was considered a success. In addition to the success of the mining operation a number of Messerschmitt 110's were shot up, barracks were destroyed and one small minesweeper was sunk.

In August 1944, HMS NABOB participated in "Operation GOODWOOD" with the Home Fleet. It was the *largest Fleet Air Arm (FAA) operation* the object of which was to immobilize the German battleship TIRPITZ anchored in Altenfiord, Northern Norway. TIRPITZ was to be attacked on a number of occasions. Force 2 consisting of five frigates of the RN's Fifth Escort Squadron, the cruiser HMS KENT and the escort carriers HMS NABOB and HMS TRUMPETER departed Scapa Flow to arrive off Northern Norway by 20 August to attack German held airfields. The main force supporting the operation were the fleet carriers HMS INDEFATIGABLE, HMS FORMIDABLE, HMS FURIOUS, two cruisers and fourteen destroyers. This operation was to be synchronized with the passage of Convoy JW.59 from the United Kingdom to Northern Russia.

First efforts on 20 August to launch 14 AVENGERS, armed with mines, was thwarted by bad weather and a second attempt on the 22nd was also cancelled by adverse weather. On the third attempt the main force launched strike aircraft for attacks on the TIRPITZ but only a few managed to penetrate the bad weather and only one hit with a 500 lb bomb was claimed. Later HMS NABOB flew a Combat Air Patrol (CAP) over the main force. While the aircraft carrier was withdrawing westward with Force 2 gale she was torpedoed by a German submarine, U 354, resulting in a hole about 32 feet square located aft of the engine room and below the waterline.

None of the escorts had been in anti-submarine contact and it was assumed that a German submarine using an electric torpedo had torpedoed her at long range. One of HMS NABOB's escorts, the frigate HMS BICKERTON, on an anti-submarine (ASW) sweep was torpedoed as well. Because of her mercantile hull, HMS NABOB's damage control parties had a difficult task shoring up the ship at the damaged location. Unfortunately the number of killed and wounded was high. At action stations for most of the day the Supply Department personnel outside the Spirit Room for the daily Rum Issue were to suffer high casualties as were the mess men who were also in the area.



Because of the lack of electrical power and the high temperature in the engine and boiler rooms, many of the ship's company were removed. Boats and Carley Floats were launched and 214 of the ships company were evacuated. Vital spaces were finally shored-up, power was restored, and by early evening, HMS NABOB was underway. The story of how the ships' company saved their ship is a saga in itself. Two AVENGERS were launched on a submarine contact and managed to keep

the submarine submerged for three and half-hours while HMS NABOB departed the area. On recovery, one of the AVENGERS caught a barrier and caused damage to six aircraft and itself. After jettisoning all portable heavy gear and several aircraft off the canted heaving deck, transferring 203 of the ship's company to the destroyer HMCS ALGONQUIN, dealing with a surface wind speed of 43 knots, HMS NABOB reached the safe waters of Scapa Flow on 27 August.

HMS NABOB never sailed again in the RN but was cannibalized for spare parts for other ships. In commission less than a year, she taught the RCN about the operation of aircraft from aircraft carriers. Following WW II, her flight deck was removed and a new superstructure built. The ship subsequently sailed as a civilian training vessel for the post war German merchant service as the MV NABOB. In 1967 the ship was sold to the Panamanians and renamed the GLORY. The ship ultimately was broken up in Taiwan in 1978.

HMS PUNCHER D 79, 5 February 1944 - 16 January 1946

Introduction

The second aircraft carrier operated by RCN personnel for Royal Navy was HMS PUNCHER. The ship was also built at the Seattle Tacoma Shipbuilding Company. Although recorded as the same class as HMS NABOB it had slightly smaller specifications and a smaller ships' company. HMS PUNCHER was commissioned on 5 February 1944 and came under RCN jurisdiction on 10 April 1944 during her refit at Vancouver when Captain R.E.S. Bidwell, RCN took command.

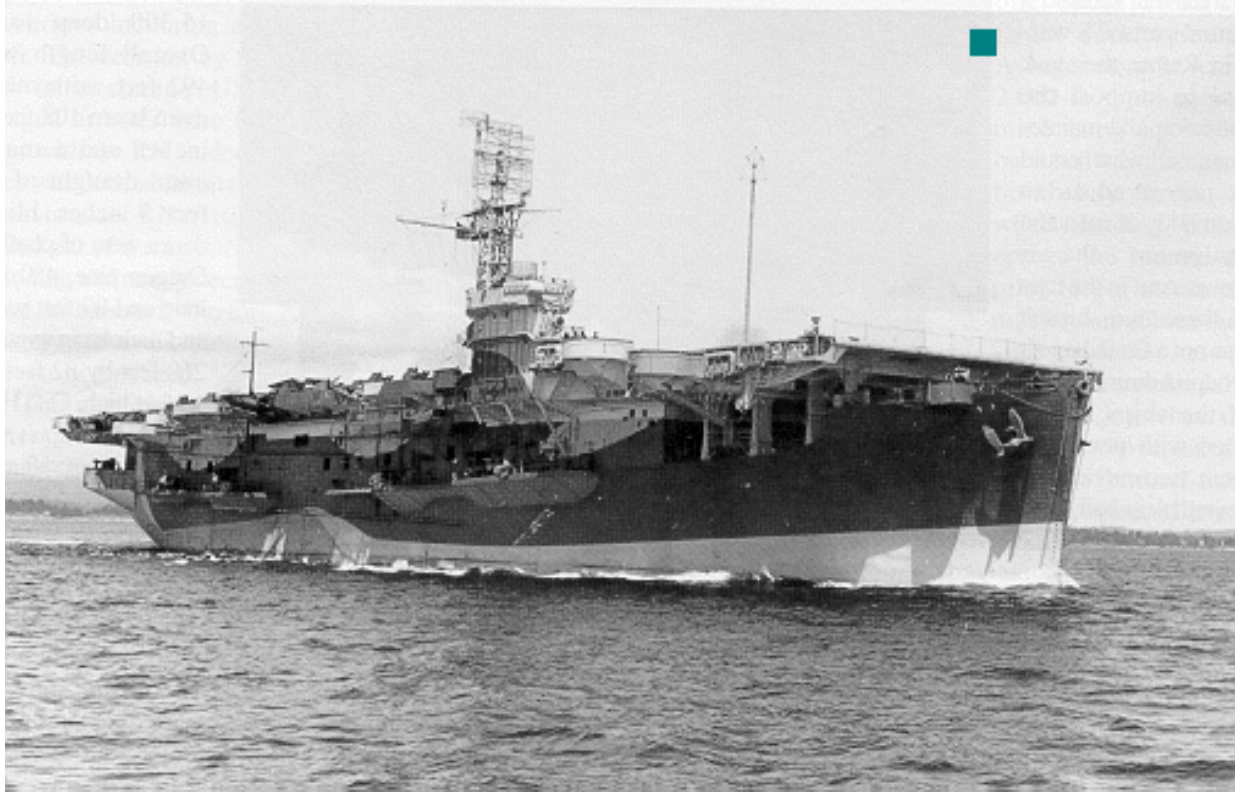
HMS PUNCHER had no air squadrons embarked when she sailed in June with the frigate HMCS BEACON HILL KA07, in company, via the Panama Canal, en route to the eastern seaboard. An old (RCAF) Blackburn SHARK was obtained and used enthusiastically as a training aid by the flight deck party. The ship stopped briefly at New Orleans to pick-up a small cargo of harbour defence boats for delivery to New York. It was then off to the Navy Yard at Norfolk, Virginia to be fitted with 40 mm Bofors gun mounts and embark a deck cargo of 40 USAAF aircraft including P61 BLACK WIDOW night fighters for service in the Mediterranean.

HMS PUNCHER Operations - 1944

HMS PUNCHER sailed with a Mediterranean bound convoy UGF.13 on 25 July. After conducting exercises enroute, HMS PUNCHER and the escort carrier USS SHAMROCK BAY, CVE 84, were detached and, under French Navy escort, proceeded to Casablanca. Sailing with four merchantmen, HMS PUNCHER as Convoy Commodore of GUS.48, turned the convoy over to another escort group and proceeded back to United States. For the next while, HMS PUNCHER was not to see her role as an aircraft carrier fulfilled as she was used as a cargo ship and, in due course, as a passenger vessel as well.

Back in Norfolk, HMS PUNCHER embarked Chance Vought F4U CORSAIR aircraft destined for 1845 (RN FAA) Squadron. These aircraft were struck down in the hangar while the flight deck was loaded with Grumman HELLCATS and AVENGERS, CORSAIRS and one Curtiss HELLDIVER. In addition, 21 officers and 125 sailors also joined the ship. The ship then sailed for New York to embark passengers, which included women and children, for passage to the UK. Five days later HMS PUNCHER joined an outbound convoy consisting of an additional 30 ships at which time the ship assumed duties as Convoy Commodore. After a short layover in Glasgow, Scotland the carrier returned to Norfolk, Virginia and then proceeded, once again, back to the UK with yet another deck cargo of aircraft.

In October, after a boiler clean, HMS PUNCHER finally prepared for her primary role – that of an aircraft carrier. After testing her catapult and launching and recovering aircraft the ship took onboard 12 Fairey BARRACUDA of 821(RN) Squadron. HMS PUNCHER, while operating in the Firth of Clyde near Rothesay suffered an engine gear failure. During this harrowing period in which she was out of control in



severe weather, the ship managed to launch five of her squadron aircraft which were recovered ashore.

HMS PUNCHER - Operations - 1945

At Gare Loch, off the Firth of Clyde near Glasgow and using spares from the disabled HMS NABOB, HMS PUNCHER was repaired by her Engineering Department and made ready for sea. On 15 January 1945, during a period of work-ups she launched two BARRACUDA aircraft on an anti-submarine search when a sister carrier HMS THANE, was torpedoed and damaged by U 1055 off the entrance to the Clyde estuary. The 22nd Escort Group destroyed U 1055 next day.

In late January, HMS PUNCHER with her escorts, HMS TOVEY and the Tribal Class Canadian destroyer HMCS IROQUOIS joined the Home Fleet. Between 5 – 9 February the ship carried out her last trials and embarked 14 Grumman F4F WILDCATS of 881 (RN) Squadron and four Fairey BARRACUDA of 821 (RN) Squadron. Force 1, HM cruisers NORFOLK and DIDO and, three destroyers sailed for Norwegian waters and within gun range of the coast, Force 2 made up of the cruiser HMS DEVONSHIRE, two escort carriers, HMS PREMIER, and HMS PUNCHER with four destroyers headed across the North Sea with the carriers providing a CAP using F4F WILDCATS. On completion of "Operation Silenium" Force 2 went on a mine laying operation with HMS PREMIER providing the mine laying aircraft and HMS PUNCHER launching F4F WILDCATS as CAP. A WILDCAT landing on HMS PUNCHER hit the round down, at the aft end of the flight deck, and five seaman were hit by erratic gunfire as a result of the crash.

After a brief turnaround in Scotland it was back to operations. For the next several months HMS PUNCHER was very active including being part of "Operation NEWMARKET". This was an impressive force of five escort carriers, one cruiser and eight destroyers attempted a raid on German U Boat Pens, at Narvik, north of the Arctic Circle, but after five days of appalling weather the operation was cancelled.

HMS PUNCHER - Final Days

HMS PUNCHER returned to the Orkney Islands and to all intents and purposes her carrier days were over. Following VE-Day she was used for several months as a training carrier for several squadrons. Converted to a troop ship this venerable old lady continued to serve from August 1945 repatriating Canadian troops from the UK.

On 16 January 1946 she arrived in Norfolk, VA lowered her White Ensign and was returned to the USN thus ending what was to be a good experience for the RCN. Converted for merchant service she became the British MUNCASTER CASTLE in 1949, renamed the BARDIC in 1954 and BENNEVIS in 1959. She was broken up in Taiwan in 1973.

HMCS WARRIOR R 31, 24 January 1946 – 23 March 1948

Introduction

Within two weeks of retiring HMS PUNCHER, the RCN acquired a new light fleet carrier HMCS WARRIOR. She was the first aircraft carrier to be commissioned in the RCN and operated by Canadians. It was the realization of a decision taken two years earlier at a joint RCN/RCAF committee convened under the auspices of the Quebec Conference of 1943.

The original plan was that the RCN be allocated two light fleet carriers. The torpedoing of HMS NABOB gave impetus to the plan that the RCN should man the carriers HMS VENGEANCE and HMS OCEAN or HMS WARRIOR in lieu of HMS PUNCHER for service in the Far East. The RN had counted on the RCN to man some 30% of the escort carriers and some repair ships. A formal offer of transfer came from the UK in January with the RN providing the aircraft and squadrons with Canada responsible to pay the squadrons.

On 14 February 1945, an agreement was made to transfer the carriers to the RCN on the understanding that Canada would have the right to buy them at a later date if desired and employ them in the Pacific/Indian Ocean in accordance with Canadian Government policy. In 1944 the RCN advised the RN that it proposed to train, in the UK, two RCN fighter, and two RCN torpedo – reconnaissance, squadrons. This training was completed by mid 1945.

The first of the light fleet carriers to join the RCN retained the RN name "WARRIOR". This ship was a COLLUSUS Class aircraft carrier built by Harland & Wolf, Ltd, in Belfast, Northern Ireland. The ship had a displacement of 13,350 tons, an 18,000-ton full load, overall length of 682 feet, beam 82 feet and a flight deck length of 700 feet.



The original personnel for the air section for HMCS WARRIOR came from those squadrons composed of RCN and RN officers and men already in the RNFAA and trained to squadron level in Scotland. An additional source of aircrew were pilots surplus to RCAF requirements who transferred to the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve (RNVR) for service in the Far East. The RN was training RCN personnel, in the Air Engineering trades, at their Fleet Schools in the UK. RCN Technical Officers were training at the RN Engineering College KEYHAM and a similar aeronautical engineering course was planned at the University of Toronto.

But first the war in Europe and then the war in the far East had come to a halt. Thus the RCN Air Branch, as an entity, did not participate in WW II under RCN Command.

HMCS WARRIOR Operations - 1946

On 24 January 1946, HMCS WARRIOR was commissioned into the RCN. Her air compliment included Supermarine SEAFIRE XV fighters and Fairey FIREFLY FR 1 fighter – reconnaissance aircraft. Ashore, HMS SEABORN, the RN Air Section at the prewar RCAF Station DARTMOUTH was disbanded on 28 January 1946 and 14 Fairey SWORDFISH were transferred to the RCN. Formal transfer of HMCS WARRIOR occurred on 17 March 1946. Ashore, the RCAF managed all support services and air stores, aircraft maintenance, housing, and messing arrangements. RCN aircraft were, at that time, registered on RCAF records. Time was to prove that this was an unworkable arrangement. Pay and allowances were an RCN responsibility.



Since HMCS WARRIOR was not built to operate in Arctic type weather conditions, her sea trials soon proved that she could not operate in the Canadian North Atlantic. This became obvious when the carrier with 13 SEAFIREs and Four FIREFLYs finished her first Canadian Navy sea trials. But, despite all of the limitations, HMCS WARRIOR still came home to Canada for service in the RCN. With a deck park of 28 aircraft and 30 tons of aircraft stores on board HMCS WARRIOR was forced to heave-to in a transatlantic gale. After the weather moderated the two squadrons embarked flew ashore to the RCN Air Section at Dartmouth, Nova Scotia.

On 27 March 1942 the Canadian Government approved the “retention “on loan” of two light fleet aircraft carriers and two “C” Class destroyers on terms agreed with the Admiralty and the purchase of four naval air squadrons (including reserve aircraft, stores and equipment) at a cost not to exceed ten million dollars”. The aircraft and stores for 803 and 825 squadrons were included under an agreement to run to 1 March 1946 and no money was paid for them.

By July 1946 HMCS WARRIOR was carrying out exercises near Halifax and in the Gulf of St Lawrence with the Tribal Class destroyer HMCS MICMAC acting as “plane guard”. This was the era before helicopters. When an aircraft crashed at sea survivors were picked up using a sea boat, deployed from the “plane guard” escort. These “plane guards” were usually destroyers as they had the speed and maneuverability to be able to keep up with the carrier. By August, HMCS WARRIOR had lost the first aircraft in a ditching accident and the “plane guard” ship immediately rescued the crew.

With two civilian St Lawrence River Pilots aboard, en route to Montreal for a formal visit, the ships rudder jammed, and the vessel went aground at Point St. Antoine. No damage occurred and on arrival in Montreal HMCS WARRIOR became the largest warship ever to enter that port, up to that time.

After further practice flying at Halifax preparations were made to send HMCS WARRIOR to Esquimalt, British Columbia (BC) as the ship did not have the necessary alterations and additions (A&As) to adapt her to operate successfully in cold weather off the eastern part of the country.

Encountering a gale while heading south, HMCS WARRIOR proceeded to a location near Bermuda to embark some RN maintenance personnel to serve on loan with the RCN. At Colon, Panama, her plane guard, the Tribal Class destroyer HMCS NOOTKA departed company. The carrier then made a cautious transit of the Panama Canal locks as she had only 17 inches of clearance – 8 ½ inches either side. In the Pacific Ocean she was joined by an assigned plane guard destroyer, HMCS CRESCENT, and the cruiser HMCS UGANDA and proceeded to Mexico for fuel, an unofficial visit and later an official visit complete with pomp and ceremony.

HMCS WARRIOR - Operations 1947

The ship then sailed North for Canada and to the new new home port of Esquimalt, British Columbia. While undergoing refit it was recognized that the ambitious plans for the RCN to commission and man two aircraft carriers would not be possible. This was attributable to strict post war manning ceilings which dictated that even if two aircraft carriers were commissioned only one at a time could be manned. As a consequence, a decision was made to put HMCS WARRIOR, a predominantly warm climate carrier, into the reserve fleet. The decision anticipated returning HMCS WARRIOR to the RN when a sister ship, HMCS MAGNIFICENT, was placed in operation with the RCN.

Following this decision HMCS WARRIOR returned to Halifax via the Panama Canal in company with the cruiser HMCS UGANDA and the destroyer HMCS CRESCENT. It proved to be a successful trip and on reaching Balboa at the western terminus of the Panama Canal the West Coast consorts departed company. After transiting the canal the carrier was joined by two East Coast destroyers, HMCS NOOTKA and HMCS MICMAC for a visit to the Greater Antilles and Cuba. This was the first official Canadian visit to Cuba since that of the destroyer HMCS VANCOUVER in 1929.

On return to Halifax and after a leave period, 803 and 826 Squadrons were embarked as the 19th Carrier Air Group (CAG). The Carrier with the CAG proceeded to Bermuda where the aircraft provided radar tracking and height finding targets for fleet exercises. These fleet exercises were made in company with the British cruiser HMS KENYA. On returning to Halifax, the carrier disembarked the aircraft to the Royal Canadian Naval Air Station (RCNAS) DARTMOUTH which had been taken over on 1 December 1948, from the RCAF. This was a significant change as the Base had been under RCAF jurisdiction since the mid 1920's.

In November 1947 the ship with the 19th Carrier Air Group (CAG) including 803 and 825 Squadrons embarked, sailed for the UK. The purpose of the voyage was to re-equip the RCN with new aircraft: the SEA FURY and FIREFLY and to train her aircrew. HMCS WARRIOR embarked the re-equipped Squadrons as 883 and 826 squadrons (18th CAG). Ready for sea training in mid November of 1947 the CAG carried out carrier deck landing qualification (CARQUAL) and patrol training exercises. The ship then loaded over 3000 crates of stores and equipment for the soon to be commissioned HMCS MAGNIFICENT. This latter exercise took until the year's end.

HMCS WARRIOR - Operations 1948

After a period of five weeks in Grassy Bay, Bermuda cleaning ship in preparation for decommissioning, the ship returned to the UK where, on 28 March 1948, she was returned to the RN. HMCS WARRIOR was subsequently modernized in 1952-53 and again in 1955-56 with a partially angled flight deck and improved arrester gear. She sailed with the RN until 1958 when she was sold to the Republic of Argentina and renamed the INDEPENDENCIA

HMCS MAGNIFICENT RML 21, 7 April 1948 – 14 June 1957

Introduction

The British Admiralty had determined from experience that to construct a Fleet Carrier with an armoured deck and built to naval standards would take thirty-nine months. On the other hand a light fleet carrier with a hull built to modified mercantile standards could be built in twenty-nine months. This reduction in building time was most important. Thus the RN built a number of Light Fleet Carriers of which the RCN was to operate three.



HMCS MAGNIFICENT was a COLOSSUS class aircraft carrier. No carriers of this class served during WW II but three ships HMS GLORY, HMS OCEAN and HMS THESEUS, served in the Korean War and the Suez campaigns. HMS PERSEUS, HMS PIONEER and HMS UNICORN were completed as aircraft maintenance carriers. HMS TRIUMPH, after service as a carrier, was converted to a heavy repair ship. HMS VENERABLE was to become KARL DOORMAN of the Royal Netherlands Navy and was then sold to Argentina where she became "25 de MAYO". HMS VENGEANCE was sold to the Royal Australian Navy and after a rebuild, in Holland, went to the Brazilian Navy as MINAS GERIAS. As previously noted HMCS WARRIOR after service with the RCN and RN was sold to Argentina as the INDEPENENCIA.

HMS COLOSSUS was first loaned to, and then bought by the French Navy as ARROMANCHES. Used extensively in French Indo China in the 40's and 50's she was rebuilt in the mid fifties with a

strengthened flight deck and angled flight deck. As noted earlier HMCS WARRIOR served in the RCN and was returned to the Royal Navy.

Following the Canadian Government Cabinet decision, of January 1947, to return HMCS WARRIOR to the Royal Navy and to keep only one carrier in commission, the future hopes of the Naval Air Branch became centered on HMCS MAGNIFICENT. Harland and Wolf, Ltd, Belfast, Northern Ireland, also built this carrier. Unlike her predecessor, HMCS MAGNIFICENT was modified for cold weather operations and had incorporated Canadian enhancements including improved messing. Though essentially the same size as HMCS WARRIOR she did have a slightly longer (3 feet) overall length.

HMCS MAGNIFICENT -Operations 1948

HMCS MAGNIFICENT carried two types of aircraft. The first was a later version of the Fairey FIREFLY, the Mk IV, than the version that had previously been flown by HMCS WARRIOR. The second aircraft was a fighter aircraft, the Hawker SEA FURY FB II, considered by most to have been the finest and fastest propeller driven aircraft ever produced. HMCS MAGNIFICENT put to sea, for the first time, on 15 April, 1948 and, after successful sea and flight deck trials, returned to Belfast to embark aircraft and those of 806 RN Aerobatics Squadron for transport to Canada. HMCS MAGNIFICENT arrived in Canada, 1 June 1948 and disembarked her aircraft to RCNAS DARTMOUTH.

Later in the fall of the year HMCS MAGNIFICENT in company with the Tribal Class destroyers HMCS HAIDA and HMCS NOOTKA conducted joint exercises, including reconnaissance exercises, with the RCAF in the Magdalen Islands area and as far north as Wakeham Bay in Hudson Strait.

HMCS MAGNIFICENT - Operations 1949

Training exercises with the RN over the life of MAGNIFICENT were numerous; the first by this ship occurred in early 1949. During March and April she took part in exercises with British and Canadian ships and made a trip to the UK to exchange Fairey FIREFLY Mk IV for the new FIREFLY Mk V ASW aircraft and additional SEA FURY FB II's

After a short period alongside in Halifax, HMCS MAGNIFICENT, with SEA FURY's and the newly formed 826 Squadron equipped with FIREFLY I and V 's embarked, proceeded to Bermuda in company with HMCS NOOTKA and HMCS HAIDA for CARQUALS. Due to bad weather conditions in the Bermuda area the group proceeded to Kingston, Jamaica for exercises with the RN cruiser HMS JAMAICA on passage from the Panama Canal. HMCS JAMACIA was located at a distance of 210 nautical miles (240 statute miles) and a strike was mounted using nine SEA FURY's attacking at a range of 162 NM with great surprise and effect. . The group then proceeded towards the Panama Canal and were joined by units from the West Coast, the cruiser HMCS ONTARIO, the destroyer HMCS ATHABASKAN and the frigate HMCS ANTIGONISH collectively known as Task Force (TF) 215.9. HMCS MAGNIFICENT became Commander, Task Force (CTF) 215.



At this time the Canadians joined the RN and the USN (West Indies Squadron) for intensive exercises. On completion of these exercises the TF proceeded to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Following a short visit to Bermuda the ships returned to Halifax on 7 April, 1949.

At this point in time the question has to be asked why would RCN ships be spending all that time in southern waters – the Caribbean, Bermuda, Cuba and Panama while there is a perfectly good ocean off Canada's East Coast. The answer is weather. A review of winter weather conditions off the East Coast will tell of a long history of foul, late autumn and winter storms. Stories of both east and westbound convoys tell the tale of gale force winds and heavy weather. This sort of weather is not conducive to flying operations in peacetime when the object is to train and refine operations not to unnecessarily destroy ships and aircraft.

HMCS MAGNIFICENT unfortunately went aground at Port Mouton, southwest of Halifax and, when pulled off by the accompanying destroyers, returned to Halifax to off-load her aircraft. She then proceeded to Saint John, NB for a hull survey and a refit that kept her out of operation until October when she returned to service. During this refit an alternate Deck Landing Control Officer's (DLCO) position was fitted as it was intended to convert from the British to the American deck landing technique. Although fitted it was not intended to change to the American system until after the fall cruise.

Modern Aircraft Carrier Control Locations

The definition of an "aircraft carrier" from the Concise English Dictionary states:

"A ship designed for the housing and servicing of aircraft, with a deck where they can take off and alight".

In reality it is a floating mobile airfield. To facilitate the launching and recovery of aircraft there are several key locations which require explanation.

On the starboard or right side of the flight deck is a structure called the "island" which contains the bridge/navigation platform, which controls the ship activities. In the aft part of the island is the flying control platform (FLYCO) which controls the flight deck operations of the ship. It is essentially the control tower of a land-based airfield. Assisting Lieutenant-Commander Flying (LCdr F/Little "F") in "FLYCO" are two officers on the flight deck, both aviators. First is the Flight Deck Officer (FDO) who controls the spotting (placement) and launching of aircraft. The other, situated aft on the port or left side of the flight deck, is the Landing Signals Officer (LSO).

As a general rule in the 1930's and 1940's British naval aircraft had long noses with their pilots positioned behind long engines such as the Supermarine SEAFIRE's and the Fairey FIREFLY 's Rolls Royce MERLIN's or the Hawker SEA FURY's Bristol CENTAURUS 18. Thus landing on a moving aircraft carrier behind this impediment was tricky. In the British system when the aircraft flew down the port side of the ship in the landing pattern he acquired the LSO visually and at the proper time and keeping the LSO in sight at all times made a sweeping turn to the left and on final approach responded to the LSO's, hand signals.

With the American system in the early 1950's the LSO's signals were not acquired as early in the landing pattern but the system was equally as efficient. Instead of joining the landing pattern in a sweeping turn to port the landing aircraft lined up on the carrier from astern using a straight in approach. So why with British designed aircraft would we use the American system? Uniformity. With the passage of time the Canadian Navy was operating more and more with the USN. Thus on joint maneuvers HMCS MAGNIFICENT provided another emergency deck for US Naval aviators and our pilots could, in turn, use their decks.

Further Operations

On 17 November, HMCS MAGNIFICENT, while at sea doing CARQUALS with HMCS HAIDA and HMCS SWANSEA, in company was ordered to carry out a search for a missing American B-29.

The aircraft, en route Bermuda, failed to locate Kindley Field; it then ran out of fuel and had to ditch. Operating conditions were difficult and HMCS SWANSEA with mechanical problems was ordered to act independently. On the 19th of November, in marginal weather conditions, HMCS MAGNIFICENT had eight aircraft on the search and was just recovering them when the second Officer-of-the-Watch (OOW) in HMCS HAIDA sighted a B-17 rescue aircraft orbiting and dropping life raft at a distance of about 14 miles.

HMCS MAGNIFICENT transferred her Principal Medical Officer to HMCS HAIDA to attend to the survivor's cuts, bruises and dehydration. The ships then proceeded to St George, Bermuda where the survivors were off-loaded amidst great media fanfare. When HMCS HAIDA entered St. George Harbour a large number of the local inhabitants lined the banks of the narrow channel chanting "Hurrah the Navy". On completion the Task Group proceeded to the US Naval Base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba for a short visit and then to a favorite port, San Juan, Puerto Rico. A flypast was flown over San Juan on the carrier's departure. On arrival at Halifax six FIREFLYs were flown to HMCS SHEARWATER with the remainder of the CAG being lightered ashore.

HMCS MAGNIFICENT - Operations 1950

In early January 1950, MAGNIFICENT, with HMCS MICMAC in company, proceeded to Bermuda where her FIREFLY's were flown off to the United States Air Force Base (USAFB) KINDLEY FIELD. The aircraft continued to exercise from Bermuda until the end of the month when the aircraft were recovered and the carrier returned to Halifax.

Spring Cruise

TG 215.1 (MAGNIFICENT and HMCS MICMAC) departed for the 1950 Spring Cruise, in southern waters, on 13 February. Right from the start the maximum amount of deck landing training was carried out together with cloud flying, aerobatics, interceptions, navigation exercises (NAVEX), scouting exercises etc. On this trip a FIREFLY went over the starboard bow and though the MICMAC quickly recovered the observer, the pilot was lost. A brief visit was made to Charleston, South Carolina and, on departure, a salute to the city was given by a flight of 14 FIREFLY's of the 18th CAG. Then it was off for more exercises and a brief call to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

Exercise CARIBEX 50

Exercise "CARIBEX 50" saw HMCS MAGNIFICENT searching for the main force of the USN consisting of 2 aircraft carriers, 1 battleship, 3 cruisers and 16 destroyers. HMCS MAGNIFICENT's FIREFLY's flying at 50 feet found the American fleet and simulated an attack out of the sun from 800 feet. Meanwhile, HMCS MAGNIFICENT was in turn discovered by the Americans and was attacked by a strike of 20 Grumman F8F BEARCAT's and 30 Douglas AD SKYRAIDER's followed by another 16 BEARCATS. The two Task Groups combined and from 75 miles at sea carried out an air strike on the GUANTANAMO airfield.

During the exercise HMCS MAGNIFICENT controlled the USN aircraft while the battleship USS MISSOURI and the cruiser USS WORCESTER controlled MAGNIFICENT's aircraft over their respective task groups. Then TG 22.1(RCN) proceeded to join TG 22.2 (RN) consisting of the cruiser HMS GLASGOW and the frigate HMS SNIPE. After extensive exercises with USN destroyers and minesweepers and enthusiastic ASW exercises with support from a USN Hunter Killer Group, the British and Canadian TG's broke off for joint exercises. Enroute a visit to New York, MAGNIFICENT and her plane guard cleaned ship and then went alongside for a brief visit. On completion the ships returned to their respective home ports.

Canadian Special Service Squadron

In the third year of her commission HMCS MAGNIFICENT became the flagship of a Canadian Special Service Squadron (CSSS). The CSSS was destined to sail on a diplomatic cruise to visit some of the countries of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in order to consolidate ties of friendship and to let them know something about Canada's Navy. The CSSS, HMCS MAGNIFICENT, with two squadrons of fighters, 803 and 883 (SEA FURY FB II) and an ASW squadron, 825 (FIREFLY V) embarked and the Tribal Class destroyers HMCS HURON and HMCS MICMAC in company, departed Halifax on 22 August 1950,



The aircraft were flown ashore to RNAS EGLINTON, where many of the aircrew had trained, while the HMCS MAGNIFICENT secured to a buoy in Lough Foyle, off Moville, the Republic of Ireland. The destroyers went up the River Foyle to Londonderry, Northern Ireland, a port well known to RCN ships during WW II. Then it was back to sea again for sea and air exercises with RN and RAF aircraft and RN ships en route Rosyth, Scotland.

Rear Admiral E.R.Mainguy, OBE, RCN assumed command of the CSSS, flying his flag in HMCS MAGNIFICENT. The air group carried out a simulated strike against His Majesty's Australian Ship

(HMAS) SYDNEY, a Majestic Class aircraft carrier, in the Moray Firth, in Northeast Scotland. The CSSS then proceeded to Oslo, Norway for an official visit where a National Salute was fired on arrival. The next port of call was Gothenburg, Sweden where HMCS MAGNIFICENT had the honour of being the largest ship to ever visit the port. After a brief visit to Copenhagen it was off to Amsterdam, Netherlands for the destroyers while the HMCS MAGNIFICENT went on to Rotterdam. This visit is remembered for the great hospitality shown by both countries. An amusing incident occurred in which the Captain's barge and a motor boat, were damaged beyond repair by a Dutch, self propelled, river barge which was attempting to pass close to the carrier's port side.

Six SEA FURIES and four FIREFLIES were launched to RNAS LEE – on – SOLENT, at Portsmouth, where Admiral Mainguy rejoined HMCS MAGNIFICENT, after a brief visit to Antwerp, where he had actively participated with the destroyers during their official visit. The ship then crossed the English Channel and secured alongside in Cherbourg, France where the destroyers had already arrived from Antwerp. After HMCS MAGNIFICENT departed Cherbourg her aircraft were recovered from LEE – on – SOLENT via a brief diversion to Querqueville, France due to bad weather. On departure from France HMCS HURON was detached to lay a wreath in the area where the Tribal Class destroyer HMCS ATHABASKAN was sunk in 1944. (HMCS ATHABASKAN, first of name, was torpedoed and sunk in an action with German destroyers off the Brittany Coast on 29 April, 1944). The HMCS ATHABASKAN mentioned in these pages is ATHABASKAN II of the same class as ATHABASKAN I but built at Halifax, Nova Scotia in 1947.

From France the CSSS proceeded to Lisbon, Portugal arriving 1 November and, after a three day visit went on to Gibraltar. On 9 November, the CSSS departed Gibraltar in company with the battleship HMS VANGARD and the light fleet aircraft carrier, HMS VENGEANCE to participate in Exercise MAPLE LEAF. After exercises and refueling in heavy seas from the Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) BLACK RANGER the CSSS bid farewell to the British Home Fleet on 11 November and proceeded to the Western Hemisphere.

Exercise HOMECOMING

With the the frigates HMCS SWANSEA and HMCS LaHULLOISE in company the CSSS, now TG215.1, departed Bermuda enroute Halifax. The TG was attacked by the recently acquired Grumman AVENGERS, of 826 Squadron, based at Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, which were part of a joint RCN/RCAF Exercise HOMECOMING. The RCN pilots had flown a record 14 hours out of a 24-hour period. The Grumman AVENGERS were the same type of aircraft flown by RN pilots from the Canadian manned carrier HMS NABOB. In due course these AVENGERS would be modified by Fairey Aviation of Canada, Ltd, at Eastern Passage, NS from the torpedo bomber version, complete with revolving gun turret, to an ASW aircraft. MAGNIFICENT's contribution to Exercise HOMECOMING was to launch all her servicable aircraft to "beat up" RCNAS DARTMOUTH. After a weather delay HMCS MAGNIFICENT arrived in Halifax 27 November thus completing a cruise of great value and importance to Canada and the RCN.

Refit

In December, HMCS MAGNIFICENT went into dry-dock at Saint John, NB where amongst other improvements was the replacement of her three bladed starboard propeller with a four bladed one to reduce vibration.

HMCS MAGNIFICENT - Operations 1951

HMCS MAGNIFICENT was subsequently destined to sail many thousands of miles in 1951 to Mediterranean, European and Caribbean waters in support of NATO and National operations and exercises.

TG 215.1, HMCS MAGNIFICENT with HMCS CRESCENT as plane guard, after a delay to rectify apparent sabotage in the form of sand and metal filings in the main gear box of the carrier, sailed for United States Naval Air Station (USNAS) QUONSET POINT, Rhode Island, to recover the aircraft of the 18th CAG which was exercising there. Then it was to Bermuda where the aircraft operated from the USAFB KINDLEY FIELD, exercising with the carrier as required. The rigor of carrier flying was displayed with three crashes in one day, two SEA FURIES and one AVENGER. The pilot of one of the SEA FURIES was lost but the other aircrew were rescued by the plane guard. The pilot of the AVENGER, having exited the aircraft, returned to retrieve his dinghy then calmly walked along the wing, inflated his dinghy, climbed in and was rescued by the plane guard's sea boat.

Rescue At Sea

Following a brief return to Halifax, the carrier, with HMCS MICMAC as plane guard, returned to Bermuda for exercises. In early April the Task group was enroute to Trinidad when it encountered a small, 500-ton, diesel passenger ship, the GILBERT Jr, of Santo Domingo registry. The vessel which had a crew of 12, 16 passengers, and two horses, was out of fuel, and had been adrift for a couple of days. HMCS MICMAC, took the GILBERT Jr in tow and brought her to Willemstad, Curacao where she was turned over to a commercial tug.

On 6 April, HMCS MAGNIFICENT, with MICMAC in company, entered Port of Spain, Trinidad and secured alongside King's Wharf, then being the largest ship ever to do so. On departure, and with ideal flying weather, the carrier exercised her aircraft while en route to Barbados, and subsequently to Boston, Massachusetts .

Mediterranean Deployment

On returning to Halifax her aircraft were flown ashore to RCNAS SHEARWATER. After short exercises in May and June to work-up her squadrons, HMCS MAGNIFICENT set off for a Mediterranean cruise.

In the Med, Blackburn FIREBRANDs of the RNs 827 Squadron, based at RNAS HAL FAR, Malta carried out a torpedo attack on HMCS MAGNIFICENT but, not before they were intercepted by SEA FURIES. For over two weeks exercises were carried out with the ships anchoring at night in Marsaxlokk Bay, Malta. Two RN "T" class submarines, HMS TABARD and HMS TEREDO, were available for ASW exercises. The SEA FURIES were engaged in army manoeuvres and interception exercises with RAF VAMPHIRE jet fighters from RAF TAKLAI.

Placed in quarantine briefly with a Poliomyelitis scare, HMCS MAGNIFICENT was later granted pratique by the port authorities and shore leave was authorized after the carrier entered Grand Harbour, Malta. Following more exercises the ship proceeded to Naples, Italy operating en route with the RN frigate HMS LOCH LOMOND and HM Submarine MERMAID which acted as a target for HMCS MAGNIFICENT's AVENGERs . After a busy week and with a last view of Rome and Naples during flypasts of those cities the ships in company with the RN carrier HMS OCEAN anchored off the French town of Saint Raphael where a number of NATO ships, the French cruiser GEORGES LEYGUES with two destroyers, and the RN cruiser HMS LIVERPOOL were at anchor.

Exercise SYMPHONIE DEUX

Exercise "SYMPHONIE DEUX" by these NATO ships was not a great success over the next two weeks due to extremely bad weather. Anchored at Salins d'Hyeres 35 NATO ships were subject to attacks by midget submarines. After a post exercise wrap-up HMCS MAGNIFICENT and HMCS MICMAC sailed for home in a full gale. Passing Gibraltar the Canadian ship's companies were treated to the sight of the Italian Naval Training Ship AMERIGO VESPUCCI, a three masted square rigged sailing vessel of 3,543 tons running up a jib-sail and letting fly her other sails while firing a salute to the Canadian Commodore's Broad Pennant. All of the ships arrived home October 24, 1951.

On 29 October Commodore K.F.Adams Broad Pennant was struck and, under Captain K.L. Dyer's command, the ship embarked the officers and men of 410 Squadron RCAF. After stopping at Norfolk, Virginia to embark their 48 Canadair SABRE jet fighters for passage to Glasgow, Scotland. Encountering severe weather en route, the ship hove to on two occasions to re-secure the SABRE and in due course offloaded them at King George V Dock in the Clyde. The SABRE's place was taken by some new Hawker SEA FURIES, which had been purchased from the UK

Enroute to Canada, HMCS MAGNIFICENT diverted to the SS COLUMBIA to assist with the evacuation of a soldier of the Canadian 27th Brigade enroute to Europe. This soldier was picked up in a sea boat and course was resumed to Halifax. When HMCS MAGNIFICENT was de-ammunitioned and gas pumped out the ship went in for a long refit at the Halifax Shipyards.

HMCS MAGNIFICENT - Operations 1952

Following the refit HMCS MAGNIFICENT undocked and returned to service on April 12 1952. After



embarking 158 tons of stores, she went to sea where, with 60 relatives onboard, a memorial service was held at the site of a collision of two AVENGER aircraft with the loss of their crews the previous week. Carrier flying was and is an inherently dangerous occupation and collisions and flying accidents were not an uncommon occurrence.

In May the carrier was moved away from the jetty using AVENGERs on the flight deck as a form of tug assistance but their novel/noisy practice was just that – a practice. At sea with the cruiser HMCS QUEBEC acting as plane guard, HMCS MAGNIFICENT carried out a first by recovering a US Navy blimp on her after lift. Proceeding to Bermuda waters in which area her air group worked up, HMCS MAGNIFICENT then returned to Halifax where on May 17 she again went to sea. This time it was to show off the Navy to the Canadian Industrial Preparedness Association, which was holding a convention in Halifax.

At sea, HMCS MAGNIFICENT accompanied by the cruiser HMCS QUEBEC the destroyer HMCS CRESCENT and the frigate HMCS La HULLOISE carried out a program of ship and air exercises. The Carrier Air Group attacked towed targets with 20mm guns, rockets and depth charges. Then with the 30th Support Air Group (SAG) flying from shore an anti ship attack was carried out and followed by a fly-past.

HMCS MAGNIFICENT in Europe

On 2 June with the 30th CAG embarked, HMCS MAGNIFICENT sailed on a four-month cruise to European waters. Following a series of exercises with her plane guard, HMCS HAIDA, HMCS MAGNIFICENT embarked Rear Admiral Casper John, RN, who witnessed flying operations. On June 17 Exercise CASTENETS began. With her new plane guard HMS CONTEST in company, HMCS MAGNIFICENT began convoy support exercises including night anti-submarine exercises and afternoon fighter sorties. Phase III was offensive operations against submarines. Operating under wartime conditions the ships aircraft scored two submarine sightings and two enemy aircraft were shot down.

After embarking stores at Spithead, the carrier sailed to Malta with HMS SAVAGE as escort. At Malta, HMCS MAGNIFICENT embarked stores including tractors for the Red Cross in Greece. With CAG aircraft airborne, HMCS MAGNIFICENT with HMS DARING as escort met the Royal Navy's Mediterranean Fleet. The period of operations during this period in the Med included periods of intensive operations, a fleet regatta during which RCN crews came in "almost the middle" of the fleet participants and, as a grand finale, all of the hands onboard except the duty watch had to abandon ship.

HMCS MAGNIFICENT and her escorts then proceeded to the Sea of Marmora and passed through the Dardanelles to Istanbul, Turkey. A National Salute was fired and the ships prepared for a relatively peaceful visit. But the peace was soon over. During a reception at the British Embassy, the British ships were alerted to a developing crisis in Egypt and that they must prepare to sail. The British and Canadian Ambassador agreed that the British ships would sail first, the Canadians second, and the four American destroyers who were en route to the USA from Korea would sail last.

HMCS MAGNIFICENT originally sailed for Malta but was diverted to Tobruk in North Africa where she refueled five ships. At Malta she sent her aircraft ashore to RNAS Hal Far where they met a SEAFURY and two AVENGERs which had flown from Istanbul via Italy. A week of heavy training followed with two RN and one Pakistani ship HMPS TUGHRIL. The ship then proceeded to Gibraltar via the Strait of Messina. HMCS CRESCENT joined HMCS MAGNIFICENT and then, the ships proceeded to Northern Ireland.

More exercises were conducted for a month including, anti-submarine exercises in the Londonderry Exercise Area. Opposition was provided by HM Submarine THULE and the Portuguese submarine NEPTUNO. A SEA FURY crashed at sea but the pilot was rescued by the Portuguese frigate DIAGO GOMEZ. The pilot was wearing an immersion suit and had spent 25 minutes in the 25-degree water and

had not used his dinghy, so the value of the newly acquired aircrew immersion suit was well proven. The carrier subsequently proceeded via the Minches and Portland Firth to Rosyth.

In company with 159 other ships, HMCS MAGNIFICENT participated in Exercise MAINBRACE. These large-scale exercises were being conducted in Europe to reassure the Scandinavian NATO partners, Norway and Denmark, that their countries could be defended in time of war. There was a 13 day exercise with a scenario that Northern Norway had been invaded and threat of an amphibious landing around the North Cape. At the same time, the Supreme Commander Europe was holding the enemy along the Kiel Canal. Friendly carriers sent their aircraft on strikes to Bodo in Northern Norway.

An escort carrier, USS MINDORO, was operating with HMCS MAGNIFICENT and the RN carrier HMS THESEUS on anti-submarine operations, The carrier launched two fighters at night in low weather conditions but only recovered one of them, the other being lost at sea.

HMCS MAGNIFICENT sighted three enemy submarines, and later claimed one of her AVENGER aircraft had obtained a definite "kill". Phase II of the exercise saw HMCS MAGNIFICENT supporting a US Marine amphibious landing in Denmark. Phase III was a general replenishment exercise. HMCS MAGNIFICENT then proceeded to the Firth of Forth under the command of her Executive Officer while her Captain was ashore for the debriefing at Oslo, Norway. But it was not over. On October 1, at midnight, the ship made a rendezvous with TG155.3, two US carriers USS WASP and USS WRIGHT, and nine destroyers and convoy ONF 27 Londonderry to New York for Exercise Emigrant.

En route, one of the airborne AVENGER aircraft detected one of the raiding force – the USN battleship USS WISCONSIN. The raiding force was subsequently attacked by 80 aircraft from the USN carriers. On 8 October HMCS MAGNIFICENT and HMCS QUEBEC which had been part of the WISCONSIN Raiding Force proceeded to Halifax and arrived after a deployment of over four months. The remainder of the year saw the Minister of National Defence, the Honourable Ralph Campney, the Defence Research Board, and Foreign Attaches, who spent a day at sea in the Halifax area. Ships exercising included HMCS La HULLOISE, HM Submarine ARTEMIS and aircraft. HMCS MAGNIFICENT sailed on one last trip to Hampton Roads, Virginia then to Bermuda waters to exercise with the RN cruiser HMS SHEFFIELD. On return to Halifax the carrier went alongside Jetty 9 for a long refit at Halifax Shipyards.

HMCS MAGNIFICENT Operations - 1953

In preparation for their intended trip to the United Kingdom for the Coronation of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, the newly established Canadian Coronation Squadron wearing the Flag of Rear Admiral R.E.S. Bidwell, CBC, CD, RCN in HMCS QUEBEC with HMC Ships MAGNIFICENT, Commodore H.S. Rayner, DSO and Bar, CD, RCN ONTARIO (cruiser), SIOUX (destroyer) and HMCS La HULLOISE and HMCS SWANSEA cleaned and polished ship. For HMCS MAGNIFICENT the cleaning and polishing was combined with Deck Landing Trials for VS 881 Squadron. RCN air squadrons were now using the NATO squadron designators. VF for fighter squadron, VS for anti-submarine squadrons and in due course would use HS for helicopter anti-submarine. VT training and VU training were already in use ashore at RCN Air Station SHEARWATER.

The ships sailed in early May and the preview to the Coronation saw the squadron exercising in the English Channel with HM Submarine ACHERON. Her aircraft, some of which were to fly in the Coronation Review, were put ashore at LEE – on – SOLENT.

HMCS MAGNIFICENT took her place at the Spithead Review ten miles south of the Isle of Wight in company with HMCS QUEBEC, HMCS ONTARIO, Her Majesty's Australian Ship (HMAS) SYDNEY, (carrier) and HM Ships PERSEUS (carrier) and ADAMANT (submarine depot ship). Onboard HMCS MAGNIFICENT were Canadian Army and RCAF contingents with official guests. Eight SEA FURIES and eight AVENGERS were flown as part of the impressive fly past. Two days later, the ships departed in various groups for Halifax and the Coronation Cruise ended in the afternoon of 25 June.

After her annual docking and, during an effort to carrier qualify her Carrier Air Group, HMCS MAGNIFICENT returned to Halifax with mechanical problems. Following repairs the ship sailed to Provincetown, Massachusetts and Quonset Point, Rhode Island. The carrier made a brief visit to New York after which her consort, HMCS QUEBEC returned to Halifax. HMCS MAGNIFICENT then went to Norfolk, Virginia in company with HMC ships QUEBEC, ALGONQUIN, SWANSEA, and La HULLOISE. After a short visit the ships operated in joint exercises with three RCAF squadrons of Maritime Air Command flying Avro LANCASTERS and RCN aircraft.

History's Greatest Maritime Manoeuvres – "Exercise MARINER" was one of HMCS MAGNIFICENT's most important events. Over 19 days, 300 ships, 1000 aircraft and half a million men from nine countries, took part in a co-ordinated operations over large sea areas of the North Atlantic, North Sea, and English Channel. The objective was to test the inter-operability of participating Navies and give them experience in working together under simulated war conditions. Canadian warships were a part of Blue Force, representing NATO, opposed by Orange Force, mostly submarines, land based bombers and surface raiders. "MARINER" began 16 September when the carrier sailed as Commander Task Group 203.6 and provided anti-submarine and air support for a ten logistic ship convoy. The enemy cruiser, USS WORCESTER was driven away by screening destroyers. Canadian FURIES and AVENGER aircraft flew almost around the clock to prevent submarines and long range aircraft from reaching the convoy. The next day the pilot of a SIKORSKY H04S-2 helicopter saved the pilot of a ditched RCN SEA FURY, the first helicopter rescue made from a Canadian carrier flight deck.

With the first phase completed off Cape Race all ships were replenished and HMCS MAGNIFICENT became part of a fast carrier force headed by the USS BENNINGTON. Enroute to Iceland, eight



Canadian AVENGERS and some 34 USN aircraft were launched at 1330 for a strike controlled by the USN carrier USS WASP. Then light fog rolled in and a recall was ordered at 1420. Ten aircraft were recovered. But before the incident was over at sunset, there was much worry and concern. Attempts to land on the carrier decks was not possible because the pilots and in some cases their aircrews for the simple reason that the aircraft could not see the carriers. Larger ships; battleships, cruisers and others with large masts were placed well astern of the carriers, which were sailing line abreast.

Thirty-two aircraft were airborne with insufficient fuel to reach the nearest land located 450 miles away – Greenland. Preparations were made to put boats crews into immersion suits and to launch the sea boats. In the larger ships consideration was being given to using the smaller “captain’s barges” as potential rescue boats.

While these options were being considered the USN submarine USS REDFISH reported 100 foot ceilings and visibility in its area about one hundred miles away. The decision was made for all aircraft to make for the USS REDFISH and ditch. But if all aircrew were successful in their ditching they would be in the water over a 25 square mile area for five hours before the surface ships could get to them. Then a miracle! One of HMCS MAGNIFICENT’s airborne Guppy AVENGER TBM 3W2 with its large radar diverted to identify an unusual radar response. This proved to be a clear area 15 miles from the carrier and was shaped very much like a large inverted saucer!

The carriers, casting flares astern for the pilots to follow and with search lights shining up proceeded at speed to the area, and recovered all aircraft which had been diverted from the planned ditching area. All aircraft arrived on their respective aircraft carriers except a Douglas AD which came aboard HMCS MAGNIFICENT on empty tanks. When he returned home his AD carried a red maple leaf in his US Navy’s white star. Final score – aircraft lost 0; aircraft saved 32; and aircrew saved 52. As the last aircraft came aboard, all of the carriers reentered the fog bank.

Later in the week, severe weather precluded flying. When the weather abated a Royal Naval Squadron a battleship HMS VANGUARD, aircraft carrier HMS EAGLE, cruiser HMS SHEFFIELD and six destroyers joined. These ships formed a strike force while HMCS MAGNIFICENT and her support group headed for Iceland. The carrier formed a Hunter Killer group and one of her AVENGER ASW aircraft caused the submarine USS RICH to submerge.

As a final component of the exercise an group of ships proceeded to carry out an attack on the British Isles. On completion, HMCS MAGNIFICENT went north to Belfast for further exercises. After a stop at Glasgow to pick up some of her aircraft, the ship sailed for Halifax N.S. In early December 1953 the annual Sea Training program occupied the remainder of the year.

HMCS MAGNIFICENT - 1954

January and February of 1954 saw HMCS MAGNIFICENT alongside for general repairs and in March the carrier proceeded to Portsmouth, England for a long electronics and general refit. By the time the work was done in May, 683 officers and men had undergone training ashore in RN establishments. The carrier’s crew participated in the unveiling of an extension to the Plymouth War Memorial, commemorating officers and men of the Royal Navy, Commonwealth and Colonial Navies lost from Plymouth Command with no known grave. The carrier returned to Halifax where she carried out a flying program with VS 881 and VF 871, followed by day and night anti-submarine exercises with the US Navy in the Gulf of St Lawrence. Subsequently the ship operated off the US coast with the USN where one of HMCS MAGNIFICENT’s aircraft landed on a US angled deck carrier.

In September 1954 the carrier joined the annual NATO Exercise NEW BROOM II and proceeded south. On completion of this exercise, HMCS MAGNIFICENT proceeded to the Panama Canal for transit to the West Coast. With the West Coast frigate HMCS STETTLER as plane guard, the carrier proceeded to San Diego, California and then went north to San Francisco where she met HMCS LABRADOR, the Canadian Navy’s Arctic Patrol Vessel which had just completed an east to west passage through the Northwest Passage.

The opportunity was taken to work with the RCAF Maritime Reconnaissance LANCASTER’s from COMOX, BC, to provide flypasts at HMCS NADEN and Victoria and, to embark 162 cadets from the officer-training establishment HMCS VENTURE. Many of these young men were destined to become

RCN naval aviators as their careers progressed. With HMCS CRESCENT as plane guard, MAGNIFICENT proceeded to Vancouver. After a most successful Vancouver stay, including open house for some 6300 visitors over several days, and with the Minister of National Defence, Ralph Campney, on board to view operations, HMCS MAGNIFICENT with HMCS CRUSADER and HMCS NEW GLASGOW in company operated off Vancouver Island and, in due course, returned to Esquimalt.

With several West Coast units in company, the carrier proceeded south for operations with the USN off Long Beach, California then, transited the Panama Canal where HMCS QUEBEC joined her for passage to Bermuda. There, the Flag Officer Atlantic Coast and his staff joined by helicopter and conducted his annual Ship's Inspection. On return to Halifax, HMCS MAGNIFICENT went alongside for her annual refit having steamed 33,745 miles and participated in several major exercises.

HMCS MAGNIFICENT - Operations 1955

Although HMCS MAGNIFICENT did not sail again until April 1955, in the course of the remainder of the year she was steamed 138 days and covered 34,260 miles on three major exercises including; FOGBANK, NEW BROOM IV and SEA ENTERPRISE. In this period the ship made visits to ten countries. Four thousand hours were flown during which 1975 deck landings were made and seven aircrew were rescued from ditched aircraft by the ship's helicopter.

HMCS MAGNIFICENT, HMCS HAIDA and HMCS MICMAC proceeded to San Juan, Puerto Rico and the West Indies putting her aircraft ashore to allow them to exercise while the ship was alongside. The aircraft returned onboard on 29 April for anti-submarine exercises with the USN submarine USS ARGONAUT. The ship cleared Bermuda waters 9 May en route to Portsmouth, England. Due to weather conditions the ships had to steer contrary to the mean line of advance to launch and recover aircraft thus using larger quantities of fuel than had been anticipated. The ship then proceeded to refuel at Portsmouth. With members of the National Defence College on board the ship returned to Halifax on June 7.

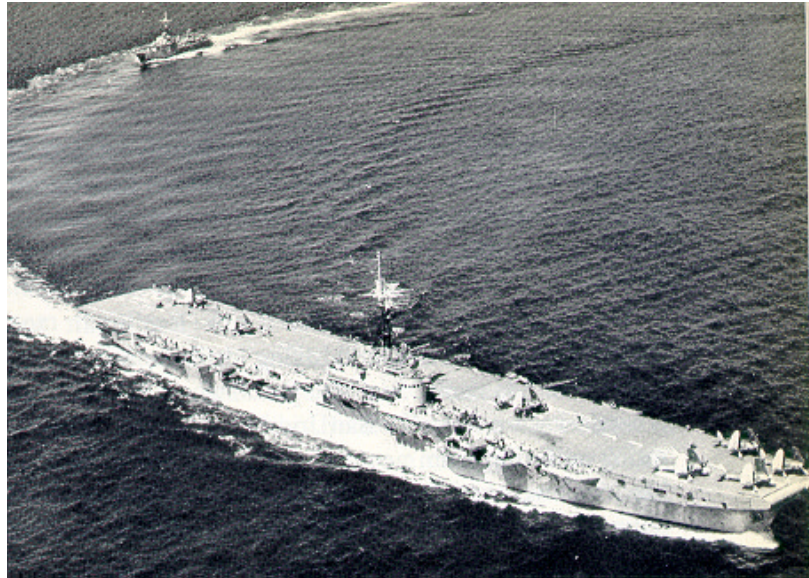
On 8 August a unique exercise took place. The first aircraft of VC 920 Reserve Squadron from HMCS YORK of Toronto, which had been practising simulated carrier procedures at RCNAS flew from the ship. Over a nine-day period at sea all nine pilots of the squadron became carrier qualified. With Commodore E.P. Tisdall flying his flag as Senior Canadian Officer Presently Afloat (SCOPA) in HMCS MAGNIFICENT the ship in company with HMCS Ships QUEBEC, HURON, MICMAC, HAIDA and CRUSADER put into New York 19 August. There the Canadians joined 35 USN ships to celebrate a combined United States and Canada Week. The ships then returned to Halifax by 27 August. On 4 September as Flag Ship of the group and with Commodore Tisdall still aboard as SCOPA, HMCS MAGNIFICENT sailed as Flag Ship of TG 301 on Exercise NEW BROOM IV.

During this deployment the carrier was crowded with aircraft of VF 871 (SEA FURY) and AVENGERS of VS 881 and 880 squadrons including the rescue helicopter. Ships in company included four destroyers, HMC ships HAIDA, HURON, MICMAC and ALGONQUIN and three PRESTONIAN class frigates HMC ships PRESTONIAN, TORONTO and LAUZON. A convoy exercise was first on the program which lasted 24 days. One aircraft, a SEA FURY, was lost but the pilot was saved. After fueling from the Tanker USNS NANTAHALA, the 2nd phase Exercise SEA ENTERPRISE commenced but bad weather forced the ships except HMCS MAGNIFICENT to go into Londonderry, Northern Ireland, for fuel.

Exercise SEA ENTERPRISE was a maritime tactical drill and proved once again that despite severe weather, different ships belonging to different NATO countries could work together. In spite of the lack of action due to poor weather, and the theoretical sinking of a destroyer by HM Submarine TACITURN on 24 September, HMCS MAGNIFICENT survived to sail to Trondheim, Norway for an exercise wash-up. HMCS MAGNIFICENT then proceeded to Plymouth, England for maintenance. Following this work the ship visited Rotterdam, Holland for the second time in her "career".

After departing the Dutch port, and sailing down the English Channel the carrier paused to lay a wreath at the site of the sinking in 1944 of the Tribal Class destroyer HMCS ATHABASKAN. After a few hours stay at Gibraltar and an interception exercise with SHACKELTON aircraft of RAF Squadron 224 the carrier, sailed for Valencia in Spain. This visit, unlike most to a foreign port, was not a success due to the carriers billet and the lack of suitable entertainment ashore for the ship's company.

HMCS MAGNIFICENT joined various units of the USN Sixth Fleet in port (Genoa, Italy) including the USS CHAMPLAIN. The escorting destroyers secured on the end of the same jetty where HMCS MAGNIFICENT had come alongside the ANDREA DORIA pier. The destroyers used the Mediterranean Mooring technique, which put their stern to the jetty with anchors out forward. But the carrier had to make way for the Italian Line ship CHRISTOFORO COLOMBO and went to an anchorage outside the harbour. On 15 November the ships sailed for Marseilles, France having passed through the Strait of Bonifacio, between Corsica and Sardinia.



The Canadian Ambassador came down from Paris and stayed during the visit, adding dignity and importance to the visit. Then, exercising en route with active flying somewhat reduced due to easterly gales, and moving by the West African Coast MAGNIFICENT carried out flying drills. All aircraft were ranged and flown off to RCNAS SHEARWATER on 6 December 1955.

HMCS MAGNIFICENT - Operations 1956

Following a self refit since December the carrier was ready to go to sea in February 1956 for Operation SPRING TIDE the object of which was to work up two task groups, one from the Atlantic Command and one from the Pacific Command in anti-submarine warfare. The carrier embarked VS 881, HS 50 and a detachment of HU-21 (the rescue helicopter) and No 1 Drone Target Unit and for Phase 1. The ship exercised on the way to Bermuda. The Drone Target Unit was formed in March of 1955 to provide for anti-aircraft training for Atlantic Command.

At sea, HMCS MAGNIFICENT was joined by the First Canadian Escort Squadron and the destroyers HMCS ALGONQUIN, MICMAC, IROQUOIS and HM Submarine ALDERNEY. Alongside the US Naval Base at Chaguaramas Bay, Trinidad hands were busy painting ship until mid March. After yet more exercises, the ships proceeded to Kingston, St Vincent for a formal visit in Barbados. Due to foul weather, arrangements were made for the senior naval officer SCOPA(A) to go ashore by helicopter, then proceed to the Governor's residence by 1935 Plymouth (the only vehicle available on short notice) and return after the visit in the Gubernatorial Armstrong Siddeley car.

The call was returned the next day but the Governor used the Armstrong Siddeley both ways to the airport and the RCN helicopter both ways to and from the ship. Subsequently the carrier departed St Vincent and entered the next phase of the exercise Operation Hello. Ships from the West Coast the

cruiser HMCS QUEBEC, the destroyers HMCS CRESCENT and CAYUGA and the frigates NEW GLASGOW, JONQUIERE and ST THERESE were "Orangeland Forces" and started a "war" by attacking the Panama Canal. In due course after a number of exercises an AEW (Airborne Early Warning) Grumman AVENGER (Guppy) aircraft carrying an APS 20 Radar discovered the "Orangeland" forces and the enemy was destroyed after dark.

HMCS MAGNIFICENT proceeded to St Thomas, US Virgin Islands, while VS 881 remained at Puerto Rico for two weeks of intensive training including bombardment spotting and rocket practice at Culebra Island, a familiar area over the years for the Royal Canadian Navy. On 25 March, HMCS MAGNIFICENT conducted exercises giving priority to West Coast Ships in helicopter control and anti-submarine drills. Following these exercises the carrier and escorts secured at the West India Company Wharf at Charlotte Amalie. Then it was back to sea on April 2nd for more exercises. In due course the carrier and the escorts proceeded to Port-au-Prince, Haiti for a formal visit.

HMCS MAGNIFICENT proceeded to Havana, Cuba for yet another formal visit. Following the visit the carrier and her consorts prepared for Exercise NEW BROOM V which opened on May 1 when the carrier, fresh from three days alongside at Norfolk, Virginia, provided close support for a convoy which was bound for Gibraltar. At one point during the exercise two submarines were reported 30 miles away but HMCS MAGNIFICENT's new anti-submarine helicopters came up short. Nevertheless, this exercise was a milestone as it was the first time the RCN Anti-Submarine Helicopters had worked with the fleet. Although not manifest in this exercise the addition of helicopters to the ship borne anti-submarine mission would, in due course, provide a major leap in the RCNs' anti-submarine potential.

Two Royal Navy and two USN destroyers screened the convoy while the USS TARAWA and six destroyers provided a Hunter-Killer anti-submarine group. Air support was available from the carrier borne aircraft and USN and RCAF long range anti-submarine Lockheed NEPTUNE aircraft. RCN helicopters operated as well. The convoys subsequently regrouped into two convoys, one of medium speed and one fast convoy back to Norfolk. The ships after the Exercise "Wash-up" returned to Halifax.

HMCS MAGNIFICENT with HMCS HAIDA and HMCS HURON crossed to Portsmouth, England and with the Commandant, staff and students of the National Defence College (NDC) returned to Canada in early June. The return journey was a learning experience for the NDC members with surface and flying drills en route. A rendezvous and anti-submarine exercises with the RN Submarine ASTUTE including the use of helicopters proved useful for the college personnel. VC 920 Reserve Squadron's AVENGERs joined the carrier for the next trip out of Halifax and 101 landings were carried out with but one accident.

The last NATO Exercise was another NEW BROOM, NEW BROOM VI. Phase I was not a success due to bad weather when HMCS MAGNIFICENT damaged some of her boats. Her escort HMCS ALGONQUIN had to return to Halifax with a damaged topmast. Phase II was a double convoy exercise with HMCS MAGNIFICENT flying aircraft and helicopters in anti-submarine warfare exercises. On return to Halifax her association with the RCN Air Branch was almost over.

The last trip was a three-week training period with VS 880 AVENGERs flying from ashore at Summerside. The carrier then paid a two day visit to Boston followed by five days of surface and flying exercises with HMC Ships ST LAURENT, ASSINBOINE and an RN submarine HMS ALLIANCE. VS 880 AVENGERs were the flying component of this exercise. The last airborne aircraft was recovered on 10 October 1956 and despite the jovial reception and appropriate ceremonies there was sadness as HMCS MAGNIFICENT had now concluded her operational life as a Canadian aircraft carrier. At Halifax the ship's company was reduced and de-storing began in accordance with the agreement to return the ship to the Royal Navy.

Several years previously there had been discussions concerning the modernization of HMCS MAGNIFICENT including a strengthened deck, improved aircraft lifts, arrestor gear and barriers. This

meant the carrier would have been out of service for an extended period so three alternatives were examined:

- (a) borrow a Royal Navy aircraft carrier during the refit;
- (b) exchange HMCS MAGNIFICENT for a modernized Light Fleet Carrier; or
- (c) purchase one of the partly built Light Fleet Carriers on which construction had been stopped in 1945 and then complete and modernize it.



While some discussion took place in 1956 concerning a Naval Board recommendation to place the ship in dehumidified reserve in September 1956 the government decided to return her to the Royal Navy. But HMCS MAGNIFICENT's days with the RCN were not yet over. The RCN had been contemplating the use and evaluating the feasibility of operating medium sized helicopters from frigates/destroyers in the anti-submarine role. It was in this capacity that the carrier sailed in company with the destroyers for mid ocean trials with the frigate HMCS BUCKINGHAM fitted with a temporary helicopter platform mounted aft.

HMCS MAGNIFICENT's role was simply to provide a safe deck for the S-58 helicopter that had been borrowed from the RCAF for the trial period. Following successful trials HMCS MAGNIFICENT proceeded to Belfast, Northern Ireland to load stores for her replacement HMCS BONAVENTURE, and, on 7 November, was lying off the Tail of the Bank Greenock awaiting a favourable tide for Glasgow. Here she was to load and transport fifty Canadian Air Division F-86 SABRE jets for the RCAF and return them to Canada in due course.

HMCS MAGNIFICENT - United Nations Duties

Then a United Nations emergency erupted. HMCS MAGNIFICENT was immediately ordered to sail for Halifax. The ship was to act as a troopship and Headquarters in connection with the United Nations (UN) action in the Middle East! Enroute to Halifax the ship's company made major inroads in the preparation to ready her for her new role. On arrival after five days, and in spite of bad weather en route, naval personnel and dockyard workmen swarmed aboard to prepare the carrier for Operation RAPID STEP. Guns, ammunition and ready use lockers were removed and equipment and fittings for 500 extra men were brought aboard. "A" Hanger became a dormitory and was supplied with double decker bunks and wash places. The sonobuoy storage and maintenance areas became a Sickbay Annex. "B" hanger became a stores area.

Moved to Halifax Pier 9B, ammunition and 203 vehicles were loaded aboard. Moved to Pier 4 an additional 14 heavy lift vehicles came aboard. Except for the embarkation of 950 officers and men of the First Battalion of the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada, all was complete. But Operation RAPID STEP was placed "on hold". The ship was first put on eight hours notice for steam and 48 hours later was placed on 24 hours warning.

HMCS MAGNIFICENT's role in the mission was to be an interesting one. As events unfolded the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada regiment proved to be unacceptable to Colonel Abdel Nasser of Egypt, so the Regiment along with their goods and chattels were offloaded. By then the carrier had been alongside for

all of November and the first week December. A decision was then taken that the Canadian contingent would act in the capacity of a housekeeping force. Exercise RAPID STEP II began and HMCS MAGNIFICENT loaded stores, vehicles and equipment for a second and new Army contingent. By now the aircraft carrier had become a troop carrier only – not a planned headquarters ship. Finally on 29th December, the carrier with 406 personnel, vehicles and stores sailed for the Mediterranean.

Ahead of schedule, the carrier docked at Malta. Then Canadian General E.L.M. Burns requested the ship's presence at Port Said, Egypt, so the stay in Malta was cut short. Soon everyone including the Canadian Ambassador E.H. Norman and General Burns were aboard. Disembarkation began 12th January 1957. HMCS MAGNIFICENT's ship's company was assisted on the unloading by Swedish and Finnish United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) personnel, while Swedish, Finnish and Indian troops acted as security forces.

HMCS MAGNIFICENT had retained the HU-21 rescue helicopter and the aircraft was put to good use by General Burns and the ship's Captain, Captain Fraser-Harris to such destinations as El Arish in the Gaza Strip, and to the town of El Ballah. After the 20 days allotted for unloading and a period of cleaning ship, organized visits were afforded by the Egyptian Government to Cairo and to the Pyramids. To ensure safety, UN flashes, armbands and UN Blue Berets were worn by members of the ship's company. Her UN duties complete, HMCS MAGNIFICENT sailed to Naples, Italy. Two all-day trips to Rome with audiences with the Pope, Pope Pius XII, were arranged as were all-day trips to Pompeii and Vesuvius.

On 27th January, the ship sailed via Gibraltar and a turbulent Irish Sea to embark 59 Canadian SABRES for return to the RCAF in Canada. A party of officers and men left to join HMCS BONAVENTURE as did the helicopter. On her return to Halifax, the carrier was joined at sea by the Flag Officer Atlantic Coast, Rear Admiral (RADM) R.E.S. Bidwell and the Mayor of Halifax, Leonard Kitz, who came aboard by helicopter. In March the ship was permanently de-stored and made ready for her last voyage and return to the Royal Navy as previously agreed.

On April 10th HMCS MAGNIFICENT sailed for the UK. En route she met a German merchant ship with a sick sailor onboard. The man was brought onboard by jack stay transfer, operated on by the ship's medical officer and he recovered. Arriving in Portsmouth in June, the carrier reverted to the Royal Navy on 14th June 1957. The remainder of the ship's company went to Belfast to join HMCS BONAVENTURE, which commissioned in January 1958. HMCS MAGNIFICENT joined the RN Reserve Fleet at Plymouth and was scrapped shortly thereafter.

HMCS MAGNIFICENT served the Royal Canadian Navy from 1948 until 1957. Always known by her nickname "MAGGIE" she had sailed on endless exercises. She wasn't fast or beautiful, but she did her job well and burrowed herself into the hearts of all those fortunate to sail in her.

HMCS BONAVENTURE CVL 22, 21 January 1957 – 3 July 1970

Introduction

In April 1952 the Canadian Cabinet had approved the acquisition of a carrier to replace HMCS MAGNIFICENT. At the same time a decision was taken to modernize the new carrier. Only slightly larger than HMCS MAGNIFICENT the hull had first been laid down in November 1943 however, with the knowledge that the allies would be victorious, completion of the ship was suspended in 1945. The ship was purchased in 1952 and completion of the ship commenced in July, 1952. The ship had been re-designed to enable operation of modern fixed wing aircraft by incorporating a 7 1/2 degree angled deck, improved arrestor gear, steam catapult and a mirror landing system. In addition to her strengthened deck and aircraft lifts, a remodeled bridge and funnel, she was fitted with fully automatic US pattern 3" 50 caliber guns.



How was name of the aircraft carrier decided? Two cruisers had been named for provinces; Ontario and Quebec. But while the loaned carriers had carried over their Royal Naval names why not have a nationalistic name? Perhaps Canada? But how would it look if HMCS CANADA were to sink? Even Adolf Hitler saw his fallacy when he renamed the DEUTSHLAND! On 10 December 1952 her new name was announced as BONAVENTURE, a name of some repute in the Royal Navy and the name of a bird sanctuary in the St Lawrence River. When HMCS MAGNIFICENT was in service her nickname was "MAGGIE" so naturally HMCS BONAVENTURE became "BONNIE".

A negotiating team was set up and a good deal of time was put in by RCN people. The Royal Navy people argued that the contract required that HMCS MAGNIFICENT be brought up to the latest Alterations and Additions (A&A's) for her class on her return from the RCN. These modifications were to include such things as angled deck, a strengthened deck etc, etc. The RCN case was that these were modernizations and not A&A's and as HMCS BONAVENTURE was being bought "as is" then the RN must forgo any claims for HMCS MAGNIFICENT. Canada won that one. When all the negotiations were complete the Project Office was established at Belfast – Principal Royal Canadian Navy Technical Representative.

HMCS BONAVENTURE had some three million dollars worth of electrical equipment delivered for installation including, two million dollars of fire control and radar units. She, like HMCS MAGNIFICENT, was fitted with one three blade and one four bladed propeller for vibration control. Aircraft to be carried included McDonnell F2H-3 BANSHEE, obtained from the USN for the fighter operational role, Grumman CS2F TRACKER (built by Canadian De Havilland, Toronto, under license from Grumman) and Sikorsky HO4S-3 helicopters in the anti-submarine role.

Before HMCS BONAVENTURE was commissioned, there was talk of buying other aircraft carriers. At one point consideration was given to purchasing a United States Navy ESSEX Class aircraft carrier for 4.4 million US dollars. And in 1952 an RCN member of the Canadian Defence Liaison staff had pressed for the RCN to purchase the new HMS HERMES an Advanced Light Fleet Carrier. HMS HERMES in due course joined the Royal Indian Navy (RIN). Neither proposal went forward.

Planned to commission in the fall of 1956 there was a delay so that the standards of workmanship throughout the final fitting out and pre-commissioning trials could be ascertained. The new commissioning date was set for January 17, 1957 under Captain H.V.W.Gross, RCN who was, in fact, the officer who recommended the HMS HERMES purchase. Commissioning the ship proved to be a difficult exercise. Most of the ship's company was due to come from HMCS MAGNIFICENT but she had become part of the Suez crisis. So in addition to the 100 RCN personnel available in Northern Ireland, others had to be flown over from Canada.

HMCS Bonaventure Operations - 1957

The 300 of the ship's company available arrived at Royal Air Force Station BISHOPS located just outside of Belfast where they were initially accommodated. As the new officers and men were trying to get settled in, the final inspection before signing the ship's 448 Acceptance Form was in process. Many deficiencies were found including filthy engine room bilges, incomplete aviation fuel systems and catapult assemblies. Despite this, on January 17, 1957, nine hundred guests were received, the ship commissioned and the Naval White Ensign was raised.

The White Ensign was raised and the Guard of Honour inspected by the Honourable Ralph Campney, then Minister of National Defence. His wife named the ship and unveiled the ship's Battle Board and other activities took place. But, the next day, the White Ensign of the RCN came down and the ship was returned to the builders to complete alterations to the ship as prescribed by the contract. While publicly it looked as if Canada had her new aircraft carrier, in fact, the ship was not formally accepted from the builders until they had rectified some 447 defects previously identified. In due course all outstanding issues were resolved and the ship was accepted for sea trials. Nothing seemed to proceed with ease in those early days.



After full power trials, the ship moved down to Portsmouth for storing and ammunition. Flying trials included launching and recovering of two RN Hawker SEA HAWKS, two RCN Grumman TRACKERS, two RN Fairey GANNETs and two RCN McDonnell F2H-3 BANSHEEs. The GANNET was a turbine anti-submarine aircraft, which the Royal Navy and the British Government had hoped to sell to the RCN. HMCS BONAVENTURE came alongside in various ports for various purposes then, with the hydrofoil HMCS BRAS D'OR built in the United Kingdom for the National Research Council onboard, sailed for Halifax on 19 June 1957 exercising with RCAF Lockheed P2V NEPTUNE ASW aircraft enroute.

On her arrival she received a tumultuous welcome by many dignitaries including the Lieutenant Governor, the Flag Officer Atlantic Coast (FOAC) and the Mayor of Halifax. She then lay alongside until September. The delay in her deployment was due to the modification of her bridge structure to accommodate a senior officer's bridge separate from the main bridge and compass platform.

Following a ten-day work-up in St Margaret's Bay, Nova Scotia, HMCS BONAVENTURE sailed on her first flying training exercise. Ten TRACKER pilots had qualified two months before onboard the USS WASP on the angle deck employing its mirror landing aid. Now they had their own platform. The Canadian ships then joined with ships of the Canadian First and Third Canadian Escort Squadrons and exercised enroute to Canada. Beginning 6 December 1957, Exercise "BEAVERDAM" began with BONAVENTURE recovering ten TRACKERS of VS 881 and five helicopters of HS 50 while destroyers

HMC Ships ST LAURENT, OTTAWA, HAIDA and MICMAC took station on the carrier, the whole forming TG 301.0. Because of low visibility flying operations were much reduced.

On October 18, the Senior Canadian Officer Presently Afloat (SCOPA), Commodore J.V. Brock, DSO, DSC, CD, RCN joined with his staff. HMCS BONAVENTURE accompanied by HMCS OTTAWA began a trip to the United Kingdom. Due to foul weather conditions, long swells and a pitching deck a TRACKER was lost over the side but the crew was saved. Exercises included one of HMCS BONAVENTURE's Sikorsky helicopters landing onboard HMCS OTTAWA using her mortar well platform. Off the coast of the UK, three British Army AUSTER AOP 9 (the UK equivalent of a Piper L 4 light observation aircraft) landed onboard and became carrier qualified. Beginning 11 November, HMCS BONAVENTURE with HMCS OTTAWA in company participated in a convoy and ASW exercise which include the Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) MONARCH and HM Ships WHITBY, HARDY and SCARBOROUGH.

The Canadian ships then joined with ships of the Canadian First and Third Canadian Escort Squadrons and exercising en route returned to Canada. Beginning 6 December 1957, Exercise BEAVERDAM began with HMCS BONAVENTURE recovering ten TRACKERS of VS 881 and five helicopters of HS 50 while destroyers HMC Ships ST LAURENT, OTTAWA, HAIDA and MICMAC took station on the carrier, the whole forming TG 301.0 Because of low visibility flying operations were much reduced.

HMCS BONAVENTURE - Operations 1958

On January 17, 1958 Captain W.M Landymore, OBE, CD, RCN assumed command of HMCS BONAVENTURE. After a long storing period and with ten TRACKER, six Sikorsky HO4S-3 and one helicopter from HU 21 Squadron on board, and with HMCS SIOUX in company as plane guard, departed for Bermuda. Full power trials were carried out and the flight deck was certified for use both day and night. For the first time in RCN history, flying and fueling operations were conducted simultaneously with the carrier providing fuel using the abeam and astern method of fuel transfer. The First Escort Squadron departed and the Third Squadron joined.

This period saw work-ups with Exercise "ASWEX 1-58" in which three units, a convoy including HMCS BONAVENTURE and the USN aircraft carrier USS LEYTE with their screening destroyers transited one area on four occasions which was to be attacked by a number of American submarines including one nuclear submarine the USS SEAWOLF. On completion of the exercise the ship went alongside at Mayport, Florida to exchange her ASW helicopters for the BANSHEE jets of VF 871. In company with HMCS NOOTKA as plane guard, the ships sailed for Charleston, South Carolina with her aircraft doing their carrier qualification en route.

Shortly after, troubles were experienced with the ships arrester gear which reduced the number of wires available on the flight deck. Then, two BANSHEE fatalities occurred, one BANSHEE fatality at sea while en route to the carrier and the other following an arrested landing. In the latter accident the aircraft had an apparent loss of a starboard brake following which the aircraft fell over the port forward side of the flight deck and landed inverted in the water.

Off Bermuda HMCS BONAVENTURE joined the British Home Fleet and cross-operated her aircraft with HMS BULWARK. HMCS BONAVENTURE landed and recovered a flight of RN de Havilland SEA VENOMs and Hawker SEA HAWKs while HMCS BULWARK recovered HMCS BONAVENTURE's aircraft.

"MAPLE ROYAL II" commenced in March with the same fleet under Canadian tactical command (Commodore J.V.Brock) in HMCS BONAVENTURE and RADM H.F. Pullen, OBE, CD, RCN in ST LAURENT. During this exercise, the cross-carrier operating technique was proven when HMCS BULWARK recovered two TRACKER aircraft when HMCS BONAVENTURE had a fouled deck which was in part due to the loss of her flight deck crane on an earlier occasion. "MAPLE ROYAL I and II" were the largest peacetime naval air exercise and since it was commanded by Canadians showed the growth in size and stature of the Royal Canadian Navy in the NATO family of nations.

April 1958 saw yet another Exercise "NEW BROOM VIII" though, at first, poor flying weather limited activity. Then, to prove Captain Landymore's point that the ship was a large financial commitment and more use must be made of her aircraft. VS 881 aircraft were airborne constantly day and night while HS 50 kept two helicopters airborne from dawn to dusk. This was a large step forward in the RCN carrier's efficiency. When the carrier returned to Halifax boilers were cleaned, de-fuelled and de-ammunitioned and then departed for a fourteen week refit in Saint John, New Brunswick.

Following the completion of this refit, HMCS BONAVENTURE returned to Halifax and went alongside the new purpose built carrier jetty at the Naval Air Station SHEARWATER. Flying training commenced in September for BANSHEEs and TRACKERs of various squadrons from SHEARWATER. In October with the Broad Pendant of Cmdre. M.A. Medland CD, RCN flying the carrier sailed for the Mediterranean with four destroyers HMC Ships ST LAURENT, OTTAWA, HURON and HAIDA. While a hurricane "JANICE" was encountered with winds up to 60 knots, in the Straits of Gibraltar, the ship anchored at that port with her escorts. Then, on 22 October, the ship sailed for Grand Harbour, at Malta, to await the commencement of MEDASWEX 26. During this exercise, which commenced 27 October, British, Canadian and Italian navy warships operated together and, though the weather was poor, a creditable

number of flying hours were flown and the aircraft were successful in hunting "enemy" submarines.



After a brief return to Malta, the ships then sailed via the Straits of Messina, to Naples, Italy, where the ship's companies had some rest and recreation. The port proved interesting but expensive. Shortly after it was off to sea again for "MEDASWEX 27".

Unfortunately HMCS BONAVENTURE's TRACKERs developed tail hook problems – a failure that had happened before so the carrier was removed from the exercise. As well, it was discovered that the flight deck arrester gear required overhaul. So it was off to Gibraltar where six TRACKERs were launched to RAF Station NORTH FRONT, Gibraltar.

Since the flight deck could not be used to recover aircraft, while BONAVENTURE launched aircraft during the Exercise "SHARP SQUALL" on 24 November with RN, Portugese, German and French Navies the six TRACKERs launched at Gibraltar and five more made their way to the United States Air Force (USAF) Station, SHEPHERDS GROVE, Suffolk, England. HMCS BONAVENTURE went to Portsmouth where the arrester wire problem was resolved when the dockyard staff had determined that the hydraulic fluid being used was not right. HMCS BONAVENTURE sailed for home recovering her aircraft off the Cornwall

coast (RAF Station ST MAWGANS) when they had move from the USAF Station. Enroute home an active flying program was carried out.

HMCS BONAVENTURE Operations -1959

In early January 1959, VS 880 qualified yet again when the carrier proceeded to deliver HS 50 to Bermuda. But February 1959 was a period not recalled with pleasure by many of the ship's company from the Captain on down. Bad weather, cold burst pipe joints, rough weather including snow and gales at sea so, in February, it was off to Bermuda. More arrester gear troubles when a TRACKER caught two wires breaking

one. So it was back to Bermuda to sort out the wires. Back to sea, more damaged wires, so it was back to Halifax as insufficient wire remained onboard in servicable condition. Then it was back to sea for another exercise, "BEAVERDAM III" and following this



it was off to Norfolk, Virginia with HMC Ships ALGONQUIN, ST CROIX, ATHABASKAN and NOOTKA for NATO Exercise "NEW BROOM IX"

During this exercise the carrier lost a TRACKER and its complete four-man crew. Then, after this three-phase exercise, the ships returned to Norfolk for celebrations associated with the tenth Anniversary of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. These included receptions, parades and other entertainment. By this time, the carrier had expanded its ability to keep a larger number of aircraft airborne during what was called "Sustained Operations". Captain Landymore had decided that to use eleven hundred men to maintain one or two aircraft airborne was not acceptable.

The Captain pushed and asked the air department why can't we do better? If not, the carrier goes. Reorganization was the key and by changing watches, adding more aircrew and pushing harder BONAVENTURE was able to keep four TRACKERs airborne around the clock, on exercises, as well as two ASW helicopters from dawn to dusk. Called "Sustop" this became BONAVENTURE's trademark among NATO navies, which, at times, were doing less with much larger carriers.

In April the carrier only sailed one more time to go to sea with members of the RCAF Staff College. The Minister of National Defence, The Chief of Air Staff and the Chief of Naval Staff joined by helicopter to watch the exercises and remained onboard overnight to depart the following day. BONAVENTURE showed all of her assets including; touch and go BANSHEE landings, day and night TRACKER operations, Jack-stay transfers, aerobatics etc. Who needs a 7000-foot runway?

HMCS BONAVENTURE next sailed for Bermuda on 4 May, where she went alongside the old RN Dockyard at Ireland Island to paint ship. KAREL DOORMAN, the carrier of similar size in the Dutch Navy, had severely struck the cement walls in the same place. But aware of that incident, the Captain took the necessary steps, boats etc, to avoid the same fate for HMCS BONAVENTURE. Then it was of

the San Juan, Puerto Rico, where it was discovered that there were a number of USN submarines in port that agreed to exercise with HMCS BONAVENTURE and her plane guard, HMCS FORT ERIE, on their departure. The other ships in company went home to Canada. After exercising with an RN submarine, HMS AMBUSH, en route New York City, HMCS BONAVENTURE arrive to take part in state ceremonies – the celebrations of the 350th Anniversary of the arrival of Henry Hudson in New York.



On June 11th a ceremonial parade was held through the streets including the United States Navy, Army Air Force and Marines with a detachment of the RCN from HMCS BONAVENTURE taking up the rear. . On return to Halifax, and the disembarkation of HS 50, the carrier sailed to take up a Sea/Air Rescue Station (Number 5, latitude 50.15 N longitude 43.30W) for the impending Queens Flight for a Royal Visit. The Royal Flight passed over the ship and her plane guard, HMCS CRUSADER on June 18 then; it was back to Halifax.

A portion of the Queen's Visit included a Presentation of Colours to the Royal Canadian Navy.

The captain of HMCS BONAVENTURE, Captain Landymore, was Parade Commander and the ship provided one third of the parades' company. The Captain had gone to Quebec to view the Presentation of Colours to the Royal 22nd Regiment. Timing the ceremony and aware of the fact that the ceremony would be televised nationally, the Captain revised the Navy Program to cut delays and speed up the presentation. It worked! On 12 September, HMCS BONAVENTURE changed Commanding Officers, at sea, with Captain J.C O'BRIEN, CD, RCN, assuming command from Captain Landymore. The new Captain was a former Executive Officer in HMCS MAGNIFICENT. Priority was given on this trip to re-qualifying VF 871 Squadron which had not been to the deck for a year.. Then it was back to Halifax to check the flight deck arrester gear and a return to sea to qualify 12 TRACKER pilots and 18 TRACKER crew commanders. Before this could be completed, the ship had more arrester gear problems. By now only one wire out of six was serviceable but aware of the need to join an exercise in the United Kingdom, the carrier sailed anyway.

On arriving in the UK it was found that the air bottle behind the hydraulics was set at 250 lbs psi as per the manufacturers recommendations, but they had changed it to 500 lbs psi ! At that setting all was well! Modified to manufacturer specifications the flight deck arrester gear was not to be a problem again except for the usual maintenance problems. The ship joined with HMC Ships ALGONQUIN, ATHABASKAN, IROQUOIS and SIOUX and other NATO allies including the Dutch carrier KAREL DOORMAN for NATO Exercise SHARP SQUALL IV. Prior to the first of the exercises the intention was to qualify BANSHEE pilots in night deck landings. The fourth catapult shot saw a BANSHEE go over the bow hit the sea then strike the bow of the ship as the ship sailed by. Fortunately the pilot was able to exit the jet and was subsequently rescued by the plane guard destroyer. The resulting Board of Inquiry condemned the catapult. The ship then went to Belfast where the Banshees were unloaded and went to RN Air Station at Yeovilton for training.

HMCS BONAVENTURE proceeded to Portsmouth and then to sea for Exercise SHARP SQUALL which included portions of the French fleet. After exercises all returned to Portsmouth where the ship's company entertained at a Christmas Party for orphans with Santa coming aboard by helicopter. Two shows were presented by the "Bonaventure Drifters", a country style sextet. On 3 December, after recovering her aircraft, the carrier returned to Halifax. But it was to be a long voyage. Bad weather

required that the carrier and accompanying ships reduce speed. In the vicinity of Brest, a man was landed on compassionate leave using a helicopter. Alone, HMCS BONAVENTURE sailed for Nova Scotia. A small storm reckoned to miss her hit her head on instead. The odd wave came from starboard and right across the flight deck some 39 feet above the water line. Then the forward aircraft lift was forced downwards allowing seawater to enter the hangar and forward mess decks which began to flood. Damage Control and bailing parties were busy. A good deal of damage ensued before the ship could return to her base course. This included damage to the port mirror and split welded seams. Hove-to for 24 hours, she joined others in trouble including ships in the English Channel and the liners RMS QUEEN ELIZABETH and the SS UNITED STATES. Photographs taken at the time are depicted on the following page. Two days later, with TRACKER flying possible, she launched two TRACKERs to exercise with the RN submarine ALDERNEY. One launch was not successful and the TRACKER and crew were lost.

HMCS BONAVENTURE - Operations 1960

On arrival at Halifax, a survey decided that damage was beyond Dockyard capabilities and the carrier went to Saint John, NB on 10 January to stay until March. Her sailing from Saint John was delayed once again by her nemesis, bad weather. But after a storing period at Halifax and with TRACKERs onboard, it went off to Bermuda with VS 880. Due to very favourable weather the squadron made 236 arrested landings. Then, back to SHEARWATER Jetty to replenish, load 12 TRACKERs and in due course the ship sailed for workups landing five helicopters from HS 50. While alerted by SHEARWATER that one of the stations TRACKERs was overdue, the carrier was able to read the aircraft but could not ascertain its ditching position.

By intercepting a message between two shore authorities, HMCS BONAVENTURE established a ditching position shortly after and sailed at increased speed to close the area some 800 miles to the southeast. After some two hours at maximum speed, the carrier was advised that the US Coast Guard had recovered the crew of the ditched TRACKER. The carrier then completed CARQUALS and returned to Halifax. On May 2nd Exercise SHORTSTOP commenced and, between May 4 and May 17, TRACKERs of VS 880 and Helicopters of HS 50 flew 187 sorties for 576.7 flying hours including one rescue mission to recover a civilian patient from a former USN helicopter carrier, USS HOGGATT BAY, under tow to a scrap yard by a Dutch tug. This exercise saw HMCS BONAVENTURE's escorts, HMC Ships HAIDA and NOOTKA exercising refueling at sea from the carrier, and the tanker USNS CALOOSAHATCHEE refueled HMCS BONAVENTURE during this same exercise.



The year 1960 was the 50th Anniversary of the RCN. In this regard the month of May was a busy period for the aircraft carrier. She participated, in sail pasts, open houses and in a fleet regatta in Bedford Basin that had been used to assemble convoys during WW II. Ashore the RCN trooped the Queen's Colours with HMCS BONAVENTURE providing her share of the officers and men on parade for this occasion.

On 26th May, BONAVENTURE with HMCS NOOTKA in company started flying drills enroute to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania where the carrier exchanged courtesies with the Commandant Fourth Naval District then, more exercises enroute to Halifax where the program completed 11 June. On 15 July the carrier proceeded to Ingonish, Nova Scotia. Why Ingonish the reader might ask? The carrier and her crew had a very special mission – the ship was to act as host ship for their Excellencies, the Governor-

General and Madam Georges P. Vanier from the Province of Nova Scotia's Keltic Lodge. A Royal Salute was fired as the Vice-Regal Party disembarked from his RCN helicopter and his Excellency inspected his Guard of Honour with the band and ship's company at ceremonial divisions. At sea, the Governor-General was given a flying demonstration by the embarked squadrons and from 18-19 July the ship was anchored in Hillsborough Bay, Prince Edward Island (PEI) while the Vice-Regal Party visited Charlottetown, PEI. In thick fog the carrier sailed for St. John's Newfoundland. On arrival the ship could not enter the harbour nor anchor at sea; because of local conditions. The Vice-Regal Party left by helicopter for Torbay airport.

Prior to his departure at Ceremonial Divisions, the Governor-General offered a "Well Done" to the ship's company and put the seal on a popular visit by ordering "Splice the Main Brace" and granted amnesty to all men under punishment. Then, with full power trials being carried out enroute the carrier went back to Halifax. During her month at sea HMCS BONAVENTURE had steamed 3500 miles. Then it was off to Saint John, NB for a refit which was assisted by the allocation of a Beechcraft C-45 EXPEDITOR which move 400 personnel and 3 ½ tons of freight/stores from Saint John to SHEARWATER. By 14 November the carrier was once again ready for operational service and spent the next couple of weeks providing training for VS 880 Detachment One (Det 1) TRACKERS and, VF 870 Squadron BANSHEES.

During these exercises the carrier, instead of returning to Halifax, anchored in St Margaret's Bay. During one of her stays in the Bay she conducted heeling trials. Apparently someone called the media to advise that the carrier was in a sinking condition. To quote Mark Twain "the story of my death is just a rumour".

When HMCS BONAVENTURE, with HMCS CAYUGA in company put to sea in early December, VF 870, BANSHEES, took part in ground exercises with the Canadian Army at Camp GAGETOWN in New Brunswick between the 6th and 9th. Then the carrier joined Task Group 301 for exercises with HMC Ships CAPE SCOTT, HAIDA, SIOUX, MICMAC, CRESCENT, NOOTKA, INCH ARRAN, OUTREMONT and VICTORIAVILLE. The Chief of the Naval Staff witnessed these exercises.

HMCS BONAVENTURE - Operations 1961

In anticipation of an expected NATO anti-submarine warfare (ASW) symposium, the Command and Operations Teams from the carrier were ashore from 18 – 24 January for work at the Joint Maritime Warfare School at HMCS STADACONA, Halifax. These exercises included briefings and warfare games. On 24 January, with members of the Permanent Joint Board of Defence onboard, HMCS BONAVENTURE sailed for Bermuda to allow the Board to witness operations. After the operations the carrier proceeded on exercises and then to Norfolk, Virginia. After the usual courtesies, the carrier sailed with the Flag Officer Atlantic Coast (FOAC) onboard and 34 members of the annual NATO ASW Symposium onboard. HMC Ships COLUMBIA, CHAUDIERE, KOOTNEY, TERRA NOVA and RESTIGOUCHE were in company for Exercise Tout DROIT. Subsequently landing her passengers at Norfolk, the carrier sailed for Bermuda.

For the next six weeks HMCS BONAVENTURE spent time exercising, with a brief break for a trip to Puerto Rico for six days. The carrier returned home on 28 March. The ship then proceeded to sea in late May with HMCS ALGONQUIN. Despite heavy seas; flying training proceeded as planned. In due course, she went alongside at the USNAS QUONSET POINT, Rhode Island, a US Naval Station well known to many RCN aircrew of that era who had trained there from time to time. Then back to sea for flying routines and then alongside the Brooklyn Army Terminal, New York.

After 48 hours alongside, the carrier sailed for extensive exercises with the US Navy with TF 83.3 including an USN carrier and five destroyers working energetically to trap two USN submarines. At one point in the exercise, the USN Admiral came aboard HMCS BONAVENTURE, which became directing ship for the exercise. Having completed their share of the exercise the carrier, and her Canadian plane guard, detached and went home to Halifax in late June but immediately sailed for large-scale NATO manoeuvres.

This proved to be an interesting experience as NATO newspaper reporters had come on board by TRADER aircraft and were addressed by a USN Rear Admiral. He came aboard by highline transfer from the USN oiler NEOSHO while the carrier was refueling. In due course, the carrier went alongside at Norfolk where a post-mortem was held to examine the lessons learned from Exercise RIP TIDE II.

On returning to Halifax two thousand guests visited the carrier at Halifax when she lay alongside from the end of July to the third week of September. Complete with a new SCOPA (A), a new Captain and with VS 880, Detachment One (Det 1), HS 50 and HU 21 (Det 1) embarked the carrier set forth via the Strait of Belle Isle for the training area off Labrador. Flying exercises began on the 25th for JASWEX 3/61. Exercise TRAPLINE followed with searches for the submarine, HMS AUROCHS, which like the carrier was operating amid icebergs and growlers, which resulted in many false echoes. The situation put both the aircraft and the bridge watchkeeping staff on constant alert. HMCS BONAVENTURE's rescue and utility helicopter named "PEDRO" the little burro, was busy transferring people and stores between ship's including, eight landing on Canadian destroyer escorts and 20 aboard the USN oiler NEOSHO.

This deployment included operations in and around the edges of Hudson Bay and HMCS BONAVENTURE with HMC Ships HURON and ALGONQUIN in company proceeded through Gray Strait into Ungava Bay. TRAPLINE ended 8 October, and on the way home, parties of officers and men shared Thanksgiving between the USN oiler NEOSHO and HMCS BONAVENTURE enjoying the hospitality of each other's ship for 24 hours. After only ten days alongside, the carrier resumed flying training and during the first period VF 870, BANSHEE pilots re-qualified. To illustrate the close relationship between the USN and the RCN, HMCS BONAVENTURE's 9000 arrested landing since commissioning was made by an USN pilot. Used to expansive USN carrier decks his landing may have



been an exciting one! After a useful exercise with the USN submarine, USS TROUT, which proved to be a worthy opponent, saw HMCS BONAVENTURE going alongside at Charleston, South Carolina, where she participated in extensive local activities including Fleet Sunday Divisions where 100 officers and 600 Canadian men were on parade. During the week alongside, HMCS BONAVENTURE and her escorts HMC Ships COLUMBIA, RESTIGOUCHE and IROQUOIS were made most welcome in this familiar port. While her escorts proceeded home to Halifax, BONAVENTURE stopped for three days at another familiar port, the USNAS QUONSET POINT, Rhode Isle.

HMCS BONAVENTURE - Operations 1962

During the course of her career, HMCS BONAVENTURE was host to many visitors including, the National Defence College in January 1962. Later in that month with VS 880 onboard, the ship sailed for exercises and training including frequent sorties on patrol and interception missions. Even when the ship visited San Juan, Puerto Rico, in February 1962, her air component went ashore to Isla Grand to see VS 880 and HS 50 operational from that site. Then it was back to sea to Bermuda and then to Newport, Rhode Island for exercises with US Task Group 83.4.

While transiting to Halifax HMCS BONAVENTURE exercised with the Second Escort Squadron, the frigates HMC Ships VICTORIAVILLE, OUTREMONT and LANARK, which had been with the carrier in San Juan. Enroute the ship conducted full power trials. In April 1962 more exercises were conducted off the coast of Nova Scotia to demonstrate her capabilities to the Chief of the Naval Staff and FOAC. At this time the carrier recorded her 10,000th arrested landing. In the early months of the summer of 1962, the carrier and her escorts were at sea with VS 880 - TRACKERS, HS 50 - HO4S-3 Sikorsky helicopters and one aircraft from Experimental Squadron TEN (VX 10) from SHEARWATER. In June the carrier was involved with JASWEX 62 programme exercises. In July, it was at sea for more exercises off the East Coast and on their completion the carrier's TRACKERS landed at Quebec City while the carrier visited that port. During the exercise prior to the Quebec visit, six HMC destroyers had joined HMCS BONAVENTURE for a sustained search for the target submarine HMS ALDERNEY.

The Quebec visit was a great success with much ceremony and, in addition to a reception for 250 guests, 1600 visitors visited the ship. A contingent from HMCS CORNWALLIS, a training establishment put on a stirring Sunset Ceremony on the jetty to the delight of all who attended. Then due for a refit, the ship returned to Halifax, de-stored and de-ammunitioned and sailed to the refit yard at Lauzon, Quebec. Though the refit only lasted three weeks (a mini refit) as happens during every refit, small jobs when begun during the refit often turn out to be very big ones before they are over.

Back at SHEARWATER, the BANSHEE jet fighters were winding down their operations. These aircraft were originally acquired to provide fighter defence against snoopers reconnaissance aircraft and bomber attack. With their radar they were capable of operating under minimal weather conditions. Armed with cannon and Sidewinder missiles, the BANSHEEs proved that they could meet their commitments afloat. While ashore the aircraft made the East Coast of Canada under NORAD a very secure section. The aircraft were bought second hand and were tired; a decision had therefore been taken to retire them and the pilots opted to convert to TRACKERS or to helicopters.

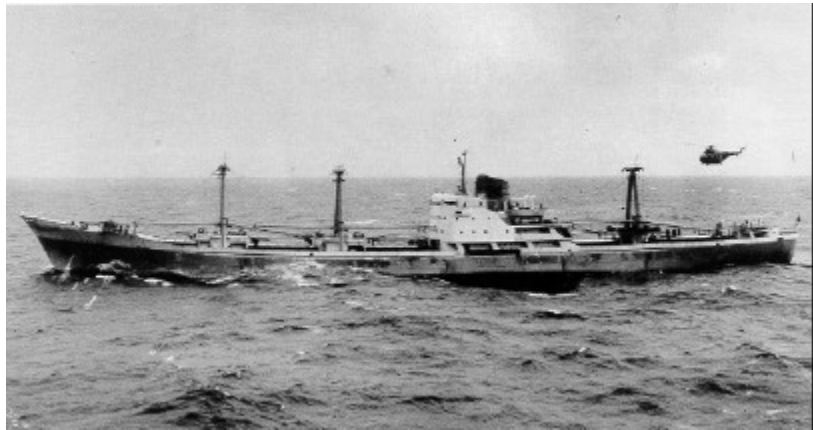
On the return of HMCS BONAVENTURE to Halifax, the ship was restored and, with CANCESTRON ONE, HMC Ships CRESCENT, CAYUGA, MICMAC, NOOTKA and ATHABASKAN sailed for Rotterdam, Holland. En route, the fleet was alerted by Air Traffic Control, Shannon Airport, Ireland, late on 23 September, that a four engine American Flying Tiger Airline Super CONSTELLATION with US serviceman onboard including 13 dependant women and children, had lost two then three engines. In bad weather, the plane ditched. HMCS BONAVENTURE with HMCS CRESCENT in company, proceeded to the crash location while efforts were made to fit 20 man life rafts in the TRACKERS bomb bays. Aircraft from shore were over the crash site, dropping flares for rescue ships converging from all directions.

Four HMCS BONAVENTURE TRACKERS were launched, in the dark, early on the 24 September in order to arrive in the search area at first light. The first ship which arrived, the Swiss freighter CELERINA at 0330 began recovering 48 survivors from a life raft using her Jacob's ladder. The freighter had sighted the light held by the aircraft's Captain. He had just grabbed the light from his aircraft's flight deck as the aircraft sank. In accordance with the Law of the Sea, to respond to a vessel in distress, seven ships, including a US Coast Guard cutter, came to the scene. When HMCS BONAVENTURE came on the scene at noon Commodore W.M. Landymore SCOPA (A) assumed the role of rescue co-ordinator.

The aircraft carrier's Principal Medical Officer (PMO) and a medical attendant were flown, via helicopter, to the CELERINA to attend to the casualties and, other flights were made to move medical supplies and people back to the ship. Eventually, four survivors, including one woman, who required medical attention, were airlifted by "PEDRO" to HMCS BONAVENTURE. The carrier, using "PEDRO", transported all the bodies, which were recovered from the sea by other vessels. Of the 76 onboard the aircraft, 16 were never found.

The ship's company was asked to search their lockers for any ladies garments they might have on hand and every kind of lingerie, night dresses, etc, etc, were offered to the one surviving lady onboard. A ship's officer made her a suit out of wardroom slipcovers! Commodore Landymore provided, wristwatches marked "HMCS BONAVENTURE" to each survivor. Two of the survivors called upon him a couple of months later when he was FOPC. The watches allowed them to clear the Dockyard Gate sentries!

HMCS BONAVENTURE's involvement in the rescue ended on the 27 September when the ship arrived in the Shannon estuary and the helicopters (HS 50 and PEDRO) flew the four survivors and 12 bodies to Shannon airport. On the return flight they brought the Canadian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, the Honourable George Drew, who attended divisions and he thanked the ship's company for their efforts and, Mr. Drew conveyed a personal telegram of congratulations from John Diefenbaker, the Prime Minister. The US Air Force (USAF) presented a plaque to acknowledge the ships immediate response and of their unselfish assistance to the American servicemen.



On arrival at Portsmouth for a short visit and refueling the carrier proceeded to her original destination Rotterdam, Holland for her formal visit.

Then, it was back to sea, via Portsmouth, for NATO Exercise SHARP SQUALL VI.

During the exercise, HMCS BONAVENTURE kept four – five TRACKERs airborne around the clock for four days for a total of 424.8 flying hours while HS 50 kept its HO4S-3 helicopters airborne, from dawn to dusk, for 92.9 flying hours. When the exercise was completed HMCS BONAVENTURE went alongside at Portsmouth. Senior Officer's were changed due to Commodore Landymore's promotion to Rear Admiral. The broad pennant of Commodore R.P. Welland, DSC and Bar, CD, was hoisted and he took up his appointment of SCOPA (A). Although the ship planned a rest period, the Cuban Missile Crisis began. Involved through NATO HMCS BONAVENTURE prepared for sea. With the ship's company scattered all over England, four of her aircraft ashore at RNAS LEE-on-SOLENT for training yet the ship sailed within six hours notice with a destroyer left behind to collect the 20 to 30 members of the ships company who did not make it back in time.

With NATO aircraft carriers spread at 150-mile intervals, the situation was very tense. The situation, in due course, was resolved and the ship returned to Halifax for a self-maintenance period. At the end of 1962, the Navy had just over 60 ships in commission including HMCS BONAVENTURE, 26 modern destroyers, 18 frigates, 10 minesweepers, 2 escort maintenance ships and 7 smaller ships. Building were five destroyers and a 22000 ton tanker/supply ship. One RCN submarine was also in commission.

HMCS BONAVENTURE - Operations 1963

1963 saw HMCS BONAVENTURE in Saint John, NB for her next long refit where she remained for three months. It was during this refit when the Captain gave an interview to a local Saint John newspaper concerning the introduction of newer larger sophisticated naval aircraft, which of necessity would require larger aircraft carriers. He also addressed the introduction of larger helicopters. The helicopter which Captain Frewer was referring to was the new Sikorsky CHSS-2 SEA KING anti-submarine helicopter which was to be delivered to the RCN in May of 1963.

In April 1963, HMCS BONAVENTURE returned to service carrying out post refit and full power trials en route to Halifax. To restore herself to operational readiness, the carrier sailed with 12 VS 880 aircraft for Charleston, South Carolina. Having come out of her winter refit without a proper paint job this was done amid the pristine USN war ships so everyone was pleased when this job was done. While a Halifax paper had recorded the visit as "rest and relaxation" the BONAVENTURE's recall it as two weeks of hell, twenty-four hours a day, as the cleanup went on under floodlights when the sun went down!

Upon sailing, HMCS BONAVENTURE recovered her TRACKERs that had been operationally working-up ashore during this period and the carrier went to Bermuda and southern waters. (The ship was put on notice, during a local area problem, to recover all Canadians living in Haiti but, after 48-hours, the waiting was over). Then a trial of an artificial moonlight system was tried which would illuminate the ship for night landings but would not allow the ship to be seen by the enemy at sea. The system was not considered successful. The ship then sailed to Halifax for a week alongside and shortly thereafter returned to sea for more exercises. During this set of exercises with the submarine, HMS AURIGA, a TRACKER, flying at low level, caught a wing in the ocean and cartwheeled into the water. The co-pilot and junior operator extricated themselves, the co-pilot through a shattered window and the junior operator through the door. The pilot and senior operator were lost in the crash.

HMCS BONAVENTURE was scheduled to sail for the United Kingdom for NATO Exercises. Some 40 ships from Canada, United States, United Kingdom, Denmark, France, The Netherlands and Norway were involved including the Dutch carrier KAREL DOORMAN a near sister of HMCS BONAVENTURE. Exercise SHARP SQUALL was code named FLATROCK and, divided into a fourteen day weapons training phase called ROCKEX, and a tactical phase, FLATEX, of similar duration. FLATEX was carried out in the Greenland; Iceland, United Kingdom (GIUK) Gap transited on a regular basis enroute to and from the North Atlantic. During this exercise one escorting destroyer, (not Canadian), nearly collided with HMCS BONAVENTURE on three separate occasions, two the same night. Breaking radio silence, the carrier told the destroyer to stay away. The tactical commander and the destroyer commander sent a complaint message to his Admiral who complained to London who complained to Ottawa who complained to HMCS BONAVENTURE's Commodore who was riding aft in his cabin and, who had been ejected from his bunk onto the iron deck when the carrier had to go full astern to avoid colliding with the destroyer!

Though the offending destroyer was Dutch, this did not affect good working relations as the KAREL DOORMAN and HMCS BONAVENTURE had previously conducted cross deck flying operations which were very successful. Afterwards HMCS BONAVENTURE went to anchor in Loch EWE, on the west coast of Scotland, but, because of high winds she dragged anchors, three times, and finally, returned to sea. Unknown to the Captain, Stanley Burke of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) who was onboard had made a tape of the incident indicating that the HMCS BONAVENTURE had gone ashore with great loss of life. Then Burke added that no that hadn't happened, as the Captain had saved the ship by taking it to sea. When played by CBC in Halifax no one heard the last two lines, and next of kin who only heard part of the story, felt much concern.

Due to the ingenuity of the Canadians the crews had located and plotted all exercise submarines with great accuracy. During the exercise wrap-up at NORTHWOOD, UK, there was much consternation about how much the Canadians knew of the submarine location beforehand. The British Admiral demanded that the Senior Canadian Officer, Commodore R.P. Welland, come to NORTHWOOD from Bergen, Norway, where the ship was visiting. At this point Welland told him, in confidence, and him only, how the American/Canadian JEZEBAL ASW system worked. As well, during this exercise Russian

“fishing trawlers” complete with a vast antenna arrays dogged the exercise. On October 30, the ship was alongside at Bergen where courtesies were paid by an RCN guard and band at the National War Memorial.

Enroute home, via Quonset Point, Rhode Island, the carrier encountered a phenomenon known to all sailors but seldom experienced “a rogue wave”. The carrier buried her bow in the wave and six TRACKERs, tied down, on deck, were completely buried by the wave, which went right over them. But, the maintainers set to work and, saved the aircraft from excessive salt damage. On arrival in Halifax the aircraft were put ashore. Between 6 and 12 December, with HMCS MICMAC as plane guard, the carrier operated off the coast for her last sea training period.

HMCS BONAVENTURE - Operations 1964

in January 16, the carrier with CANCELORION FIVE in company sailed south to Bermuda for Exercise GOOEY DUCK with 14 TRACKER's of VS 880 operating against two RN submarines as quarry. During the second phase, the Minister of National Defence, the Honourable Paul T. Hellyer, and the Chief of Naval Staff Vice-Admiral H.S. Rayner, came aboard to observe operations. The Minister was treated to a highline transfer to HMCS RESTIGOUCHE but came back by helicopter and then was treated to a TRACKER flight. It was a successful visit though there was a bit of naval humour – the TRACKER pilot had white hair and an eye patch etc, etc. On completion of the exercise, the ships sailed for the Mediterranean where BONAVENTURE launched six TRACKERs to the French Naval Air Station, HYERES and the ship came alongside at TOULON, France. The destroyers proceeded to Livorno, Italy and both visits were official with the usual guards of honour paraded, and calls made and returned by Senior Officers. After these visits, the ships rejoined at Gibraltar where HMCS BONAVENTURE was the only carrier in the exercise. The destroyer captain's were warned to stay clear of the carrier while she was launching or recovering aircraft but one RN destroyer nearly got under the carriers bow and had to be ordered to be put in the carrier's wake to keep her out of trouble. And this was only three days after an Australian carrier had run over an Australian destroyer with a large loss of life. About this time, Cyprus became a hot spot and a Wardroom Officer was heard to say that maybe HMCS BONAVENTURE would be moving “Pongos” (Army) personnel and equipment from Canada the same way HMCS MAGNIFICENT had done in 1956 to Suez.

Because the Naval Support Ship HMCS PROVIDER had a limited deck, the carrier had to carry vehicles and a limited number of Army personnel but she was to carry a maximum number of TRACKERs. But the decision was made that the vehicles could not be seen by either the Turks or Greeks, as they were “offensive weapons”. So the vehicles were in the hangars and the TRACKERs on deck. Despite this a



dozen TRACKERs were operational. Army personnel carriers included a reconnaissance squadron of the Royal Canadian Dragoons and a contingent of the First Battalion of the Royal 22nd Regiment. While the Atlantic voyage was easy, the Mediterranean met the carrier with a full gale. On arrival in Famagusta Harbour, Cyprus, the ship was met by the Canadian High Commissioner and he and the ship's Captain paid a courtesy call on the President, Archbishop Makarios in Nicosia. But only after their encountering many roadblocks and nervous young men shoving weapons into their faces.

After leaving Cyprus, the ship began to operate aircraft enroute Norfolk, Virginia with brief stops at Malta and Gibraltar. Canada, at this time, was interested in a replacement for the F2H-3 BANSHEEs and were looking at the Douglas A4E SKYHAWK and the Ling-Temco-Vought A-7 CORSAIR II with a minor modification was useable. The Douglas/USN people hoped that they could also sell the A4E to the Indian Navy but after flight deck trials, landing trials etc all of which were most successful and despite the fact that BONAVENTURE could have carried and operated 25 of these aircraft no purchase was made of the A4E. But the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) bought and successfully operated A4E's off a sister ship of the BONAVENTURE. (The Canadian Armed Forces later had an opportunity to buy A4E's but opted to build the Northrop/Canadair CF 5A/B in Canada instead). During the same exercise the Captain of HMCS BONAVENTURE, a former ASDIC/ASW destroyer officer, used the ship and her TRACKERs in the same way as an ASW destroyer and hunted down the submarine USS SEA OWL. The American's were a bit chagrined to have been hunted down by an aircraft carrier. When the ship entered Halifax it had sailed 41,750 miles having her aircraft fly 4,156 hours and completed 2,432 landings.

In mid 1966 the ship sailed to Saint John, NB for refit. The refit crew was reduced by one third due to financial reductions. How this reduction was to impact on the mid life refit was yet to be seen. During the refit in a refrigerator, under repairs, fire occurred and though kept in hand by a ship's damage control party, one civilian died. (The carrier returned to sea on December 7 after trials of a bridle catching gear to reuse a bridle ten times instead of just once when it was lost to the sea). During the period, HMCS BONAVENTURE recovered one of HS 50's new CHSS-2 SEA KINGs which were built by United Aircraft of Canada at Longueuil, Quebec. This was an all weather machine and its introduction had some interesting periods. During the period of intense training the carrier went alongside USNAS QUONSET POINT (where being early December the ship's company went Christmas shopping at the Base Exchange) then it was home to Halifax.

HMCS BONAVENTURE - Operations 1965

Exercise SPRINGBOARD was the first of annual exercises in the plans and it was planned for Puerto Rico. Preparing for the exercise required the carrier to cater for the new SEA KING helicopter, which required more stores and training. Before they left the carrier hosted the CBC show, Don Messer's Jubilee, and 600 ship's company and their dependants were in attendance. The RCN received a great deal of exposure nationwide because of their nationally televised program.

BONAVENTURE would from now on carry six HS 50 SEA KING ASW helicopters, 12 CS2F TRACKERs from VS 880 Squadron one Sikorsky HO4S-3 from HU 21 for utility plane guard purposes, and, one TRACKER COD (Carrier Onboard Delivery) aircraft which had been modified from an ASW TRACKER. Because this was the largest aircraft complement ever carried, the carrier's ships complement went up to 1,350, her wartime complement. Spaces where bunks had been removed, were put back into service as living spaces. During the exercise the carrier worked with RCAF 404 Squadron, CANADAIR ARGUS, four engined ASW aircraft from RCAF Station GREENWOOD. NS, operating out of Puerto Rico.

Putting her TRACKERs ashore at USNAS ROOSEVELT ROADS, Puerto Rico, for operations with the RCAF, the carrier went to San Juan for a two-week maintenance period. Here, among much fanfare, the new Canadian Ensign was introduced to the fleet. Many sailors were sad to see the old White Ensign go but times change. During the change of ensign ceremony there was a flight deck parade including local dignitaries present, a flypast of TRACKERs and SEA KINGs and a twenty-one gun salute by the US Navy

Base, San Juan. Afterwards, the carrier anchored in Southwest Roads for the last phase of Exercise AWKWARD – a sabotage exercise, was carried out.

On the 29th, BONAVENTURE secured alongside the US Navy Station CHAGARAMUS, Trinidad where, at the request of the Canadian High Commission's office a children's party was held. This was a great success with all departments taking part. The American's were most co-operative and the ship's company participated in the Carnival at Port of Spain and was afforded the use of all facilities at the USN Station which was most appreciated.

In March, HMCS BONAVENTURE departed San Juan for the final phase of Exercise SPRINGBOARD. Unfortunately a RCAF ARGUS working with the RN Submarine HMS ALCIDE crashed at sea and 16 souls were lost. Following a Memorial Service at sea, the ship qualified nine new TRACKER Crew Commanders while en route home to Halifax where she arrived in late March. Here her new Commanding Officer, Captain H.A. Porter, assumed command. Joining during the war as an ordinary telegraphist RCNVR (ordinary telegraphist is a naval rank not a social standing) he was promoted to commissioned rank and in 1946 trained with the RN and was a member of the 17th CAG with the Royal Navy. Thus he was the first air qualified Commanding Officer. The carrier following the usual preparations including lightering the fixed wing aircraft onboard, storing ship, and because of



her flexibility, receiving her helicopters onboard by air she sailed for Portsmouth in company with CANCOMCORTRON Seven and the operational support ship HMCS PROVIDER. Just outside Halifax, flying operations were carried out against the RN Submarine HMS ALCIDE. At Portsmouth, on Victoria Day, Canada and the Royal Canadian Navy was accorded a great honour when Canada's new flag was flown from HMS VICTORY, Admiral Lord Nelson's 1805 Battle of Trafalgar Flagship.

Enroute to Stockholm, Sweden, the carrier operated aircraft in the North Sea and in the Baltic and were escorted by an East German patrol boat and then a Russian destroyer. The Russian tended to do everything the carrier did including piping the side when HMCS BONAVENTURE had a church Parade

and Sunday Divisions. Arriving in Sweden on May 31st, the ship fired a 21 Gun National salute and went alongside for a seven-day informal visit. The ship's company enjoyed the visit and reciprocated with an official reception, dressing overall for the Swedish Coronation anniversary and National Days, held two open houses and held an orphan's party, a trademark activity of Canadian Ships.

Enroute to Belfast, the ship conducted flying operations including operating unofficially against the RIGA Class frigate she had met before as well as a Russian FOXTROT Class submarine. Other vessels, Motor Torpedo Boats from West Germany were also encountered. The ship's Belfast visit was its usual success as the ship and the port had a particularly close relationship. Then it was back to sea for more exercises. This exercise included Americans, Canadians and the Royal Navy including a hovercraft attack.

Sailing July 2, HMCS BONAVENTURE received onboard by COD, Vice Admiral K.L. Dyer, Chief of Personnel and the Deputy Minister of Defence Production, Gordon Hunter. Mr. Hunter who took advantage of the visit to look at the carrier as she was due for a mid life refit in 1966. On the carrier's arrival in Halifax, the ship conducted helicopter trials with Army CH113 helicopters which, with blades removed, would give the carrier a troop carrying ability of 18 helicopters. Tests were also carried out with the UH-1D, IROQUOIS which could be handled without blade removal and had better performance than the Sikorsky HO4S-3 "PEDRO".

During the rest of the summer, activities include 15,000 hours of self-maintenance and an active training program for the ship's company as well as their preparing for the fall exercises. Back at sea September 8, one RN submarine, HMS ACHERON, and one American, USS IREX, opposed the carrier. As well as doing Carquals the carrier was using SEA KINGs against the submarine HMS IREX. On arrival in Portsmouth, some essential work was done on flight deck gear, which could only be completed in the UK. The carrier then went to Plymouth for exercises with the Royal Navy and the Royal Netherlands Navy. Apparently the conference was full of senior naval and air force officers and, in due course, it was discovered that the RCN was to be under employed compared to the Dutch and British carriers.

Encouraged by the Canadian Senior Officer to find a more meaningful role for the RCN, the exercise was adjusted accordingly. Sailing well out into the Atlantic the fleet reversed course and commenced a convoy exercise towards Portsmouth. All phases of the aircraft complement including the COD, participated, often in severe weather conditions which necessitated that aircraft including helicopters had to be radar homed back onboard. Aircraft were airborne around the clock and maintained a higher level of operations than the other two carriers in company. During the exercise, HMCS NIPIGON, a helicopter-carrying destroyer, encountered problems with her avgas fuel system and in the ensuing explosion burned many of the ship's crew. Injured crew was evacuated by PEDRO at night, then flown ashore to a RN burn unit as soon as it was possible. Three RCN men were lost.

Unlike the days in HMCS MAGNIFICENT when aircraft maintenance problems could reduce the exercise time, this time it was the flight crews who, having operated on SUSTOP Operations, were happy when the exercise was over. After the wash-up, HMCS BONAVENTURE sailed up the River Elbe to the port of Hamburg, Germany. This was a welcome respite and the ship's company held a children's party. Enroute home a brief stop was made at Bermuda.

HMCS BONAVENTURE - Operations 1966 - 1967

In early January, the largest Canadian Task Force ever to sail departed for South America. Under command of Commodore J.C. O'Brien in HMCS BONAVENTURE the force included the fleet supply ship HMCS PROVIDER, the mobile repair ship HMCS CAPE SCOTT and the destroyers HMCS NIPIGON, SAGUENAY, KOOTENAY, SKEENA, ANNAPOLIS and RESTIGOUCHE as well as the RN Submarine HMS ACHERON. Enroute to Puerto Rican waters they exercised with the USN and arrived in Trinidad on 21 January. West Coast ships the destroyer escorts HMC Ships ST CROIX, ANTIGOUCH and

SETTLER and the submarine HMCS GRILSE. It was the first East Coast/West Coast joint operation since 1956.

While in early January the RCN and RCAF Maritime Operations had been integrated under Maritime Command at Halifax, there was still, for some reason, some hesitancy in joint operations. For example, while the Air Force ARGUS aircraft could find submarines, localizing and killing them was not their forte. The Navy hoped to integrate ARGUS operations with SEA KINGS ability to localize and kill. The ARGUS and a couple of support Douglas DC-3 DAKOTA aircraft came as far as Trinidad to operate. When the ships sailed on exercises en-route to to Buenos Aires the RCAF returned to RCAF Station GREENWOOD, Nova Scotia instead.

With two submarines in company, the ships exercised for 10 – 12 day periods. But despite the engineer's best efforts, heat in the mess decks in southern waters remained a problem. Enroute, the Crossing the Line Ceremony (including King Neptune and his Court) was held. The ship's company were issued with a proper "Shellback" certificate. A COD aircraft flew ashore to Belem, in Brazil, and having been ignored by the airfield control tower landed anyway. Only the input of a British consular official with the locals got the aircraft released. Since the locals would not accept a Canadian Government Purchase Order the pilot used his Esso Credit Card for fuel and lubricants. When his wife received the bill she was appalled!

Rio de Janeiro was not a good visit. Brazilians were not overly friendly to Americans and confusing Canadians for Americans there were many altercations. Despite a children's party the press was not favourable. Rio, which had seen its role as capital moved to Brasilia, apparently was left with a limited number of well-trained police. With bad press and bad police problems the conduct of Navy sailors became world news. Many world newspapers spoke well of the Canadians and the Brazilian Navy was most hospitable. Though the Brazilians had an aircraft carrier, "MINAS GERIAS" its air department was Air Force with little knowledge of sea power. But after leaving port some of these Brazilian flight crews were allowed to witness flight operations and were returned ashore by RCN COD aircraft.

While most of the Task Force then sailed for Buenos Aires, Argentina, HMCS BONAVENTURE went to Uruguay and inbound passed the last vestiges of the German pocket battleship GRAF SPEE scuttled there in 1940. The Uruguayan Navy was most hospitable. Then it was off to Bahia the ancient capital of Brazil where once again problems were encountered because of previous bad press and lack of facilities. HMCS PROVIDER had been diverted from the Task Force to go to Norway so the ships in company had to rely on the locals for service and oil. The ship was happy to leave Bahia.

HMCS BONAVENTURE's next Commanding Officer, Commander A.T."Smokey" Bice, CD, RCN, was to be an interim one while she lay alongside at Lauzon, Quebec, awaiting her half life refit. This refit and dramatic changes in the Navy during the critical period were to have great and lasting effects upon the force. It was also when one of the former Commanding Officers and later a Senior Canadian Officer Afloat (Atlantic) in the carrier, a Rear Admiral, departed the navy as a result of integration.

By the third month of HMCS BONAVENTURE's Lauzon refit it was obvious that the eight-volume checklist did not record all of her defects. Many "arisings" were identified. Under investigation, the Commander, Material Command (MATCOM) had overall responsibility for the technical and financial co-ordination and administration of the refit which was under the direction of MATCOM's field unit, the Principal Naval Overseer. This officer soon found himself recommending a six-month extension of the refit! The ship's crew was reduced and because of integration many young pilots resigned and went to airlines in Canada and the USA leaving older Lieutenant Commanders, some Lieutenants and Sub-Lieutenants, to carry on the Naval Air Branch. There was also a rumour that there would not be enough people to re-commission the carrier. For much of the eighteen-month refit the ship's company was reduced to slightly more than 200.

In November, Captain R.H. Falls, CD, RCN was appointed Commanding Officer and Commander Bice became her Executive Officer. To keep busy in refit locals were invited for tours and the ship even put a canoe in the Quebec Winter Carnival Canoe Race, between Quebec City and Levis, in the frigid St Lawrence River. Captain Robert H. Falls, a former RCAF pilot, joined the new RCN Air Branch in 1945 and followed the fighter aircraft route flying the Supermarine SEAFIRE III & XV, Hawker SEA FURY FB 11 and McDonnell F2H-3 BANSHEE. As Commanding Officer of VF 870 Squadron he took the BANSHEEs to the deck of HMCS BONAVENTURE. He also served as her Commander (Air). But his turnover of command planned on completion of her refit happened during the refit. In due course the carrier finished the refit on September 1, 1967.

Arriving alongside at Halifax in mid-September she began to take on stores and her warload. Work-ups included all sorts of exercises. But, as BONAVENTURE no longer carried a lot of sea-boats their spaces having been covered-in to improve weather tightness and habitation spaces, while man overboard exercises were carried out by boat more reliance was put on helicopters for these tasks. CARQUALS were begun again and the aircrews who, in some cases had been operating off USN carriers were once again onboard a carrier half the size of the USN decks which they had been using it was interesting. Moving to Bermuda, all did not go as well as a SEA KING was lost including two back seat operators. Encountering heavy seas and bad operating conditions BONAVENTURE came home for Christmas.

HMCS BONAVENTURE - Operations 1968

In January, while refueling at Imperial Oil, a fire alarm sounded – due to high temperature and a ventilation problem in Radio 3. Thankfully there was no fire. While exercising in Bermuda, on April 10, due to unification into only one service, the Royal Canadian Navy ceased to exist. In February the carrier was secured alongside ISLA GRANDE, US Coast Guard Air Station, from which during the previous year when the carrier had been in refit, the Air Branch had flown in support of the annual MAPLE SPRING Canadian phase of the USN Exercise SPRINGBOARD. Unlike the earlier days of this exercise, the Navy was not now relying on the USN but, was once again a self-supporting and self-sufficient fleet and as such were welcomed by the Americans. In all, 4000 sailors and 100 airmen of the Canadian Forces took part and as usual enjoyed rest periods in friendly San Juan where relations with the locals were of a detached but friendly nature. There were lots to see and recreational facilities at the US Naval Station, Fort BROOKE and Fort BUCHANAN were kindly made available.

Sixteen Canadian ships took part including HMC Ships BONAVENTURE, the supply ship PROVIDER, maintenance ship CAPE SCOTT, two submarines OJIBWA and ONONDAGA, nine destroyers and two auxiliary vessels. The ocean going tug PORT SAINT CHARLES was provided for target towing and CNAV BLUETHROAT provided torpedo recovery for the entire CAN/US exercise. In addition, three RCAF ARGUS Squadrons, two from Greenwood, Nova Scotia and one from Summerside, Prince Edward Island, each sent a half squadron every week while the Navy's VU-32 Squadron sent T-33 jets as airborne target tugs. BONAVENTURE's ability to keep TRACKERs on station around the clock, day after day, week after week, provided the nucleus of MAPLE SPRING. SEA KING helicopters also maintained the same on-station performance. Submarines fired simulated missiles, T-33's which simulated missile attacks on "The Bird Farm" as submariners called the carrier. SEA KINGs as Tactical Co-ordinators (TACO) would vector aircraft and/or ships onto the submarines that they acquired. During one of the latter exercises, a SEA KING lost an engine and settled into the sea, then after three attempts to take-off the other engine failed and after the crew bailed out, the helicopter rolled over. The fleet made maritime history and recovered the helicopter at sea.

But despite herculean efforts washing it down, a swift flight using a USAF GLOBEMASTER to Montreal, the helicopter was a write-off as the salt water had corroded the magnesium in the airframe and elsewhere. Following a most successful exercise HMCS BONAVENTURE sailed for a government-sponsored event – a week long courtesy visit to the City of New Orleans as part of "Canada Week" a contribution to the 250th Anniversary of the founding of New Orleans. On March 1, with seven Canadian ships in company and, with the ship's company on the flight deck, Chiefs and Petty offices forward,

Officers aft and the ship's company amidships the Canadians went up river. The visit, formal receptions, open house, children's party etc was a huge success though the trip up the Mississippi to Orleans was not remembered by her Captain, years later, as an easy passage.

Returning to exercises; had one day set aside for air firepower demonstrations for the Chief of Defence Staff, General J.V. Allard and 40 members of the Canadian press which, including visits to the ships in company, garnered good press at home. A brief three days at San Juan, Puerto Rico, then home to Halifax, arriving 17 March. On May 5 it was back to sea for carrier qualifications then, on to New York City then to sea for five days of work-ups for Exercise RACER RUN with BONAVENTURE providing the covering force for American Task Group 22. All in all a tedious but most successful exercise. On Sunday June 23, BONAVENTURE was at Great Stirrup Cay in the Grand Bahama Bank – Hands to Bathe over the side – sharpshooters with rifles to watch for sharks! Then it was off to Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Her short visit there was followed by exercises enroute home with HMC Ships KOOTENAY, SAGUENAY and NIPIGON in company.

Following a summer leave period, the ship was part of a fleet show called "SHOP WINDOW" when Parliamentarians, Very Important Persons (VIP's), and others go to sea to see the Navy in action. A fine balance in the use of time and weaponry to ensure a good show but not use up a lot of money! Then it was off to Belfast, Northern Ireland. It was to prove to be one of the last peaceful visits to Northern Ireland before their "troubles" came upon them. Then it was off to NATO Exercise SILVERTOWER.

At 0215 a Soviet KOTLIN Class destroyer Number 311 took up station on the first day of the exercise and stayed. But two days later she nearly came to grief when she cut across the carrier's bow. BONAVENTURE, by going "full astern", missed her but only just. Entering the Arctic Circle the Governor of the Realm of Arctica welcomed new members of "The Numb Friends League of Bluenose Mariners".



Meanwhile USSR Tupolev Tu-95 BEAR D recce aircraft and Soviet Intelligence Collector (AGI) Trawlers seemed to be most interested in observing a modernized Light Fleet Carrier (BONAVENTURE) up close anyway – very close!

The NATO Fleet entered the Firth of Forth, Scotland, on September 28 then BONAVENTURE sailed for Copenhagen, Denmark with three destroyers in company. After a

brief stop it was back to Portsmouth where wives of the ship's company had been flown over for the occasion. The young bloods went off to London. On her trip home the carrier exercised Bombex, Rockex, CCA's'and Controlex flying for the aviators. The last trip of the year was down to Bermuda on December 2nd.

HMCS BONAVENTURE - Operations 1969

The year 1969 did not bode well for the aircraft carrier business. The USN had a serious accident aboard the carrier USS ENTERPRISE at just the same time that British Parliamentarians began to discuss the logic of using carriers. The Canadian House of Commons would soon follow. Meanwhile HMCS BONAVENTURE and the Canadian Fleet made its way southward for Exercise MAPLE SPRING. But accidents were to plague the exercise including a SEA KING encountering a water spout and a spectacular TRACKER accident in which an aircraft lost power and went over the bow. Having sorted these out with the support of United States personnel at USNAS ROOSEVELT ROADS the carrier proceeded to the next port of call Willenstad, the Dutch West Indies. After a short visit, HMCS BONAVENTURE provided CCA practice for a flight of Canadian built Dutch Naval TRACKERs stationed on the Antilles Island. By this time the Dutch Navy had lost their aircraft carrier the KARL DOORMAN and so was operating their Canadian built TRACKERs from shore. HMCS BONAVENTURE proceeded to San Juan, then to Port of Spain, Trinidad where the ship provided the Governor General of Canada and Mrs. Roland Michener a site for an official dinner and a reception for the Government and officials of Trinidad and Tobago. Departing for Canada in early March, the weather worsened and carrier operations became difficult. During night operations one aircraft went around but not off the angled deck but down the axial (straight) deck, hit another aircraft setting off a smoke float. The damaged aircraft was OK but, on a flypast it was discovered that the now airborne aircraft was short four feet of his starboard wing.

Though the damaged aircraft tried to come aboard it was flying so poorly at slow speed that it had to ditch in the sea; the crew were quickly rescued. To avoid further sea damage the carrier outran the storm and then headed for Halifax. By this time the government had unified its NATO commitments. By 1970 the Sea Element of the Canadian Forces would have two new supply ships and four new helicopter carrying large destroyers, TRACKERs had been upgraded to Mark III ASW status with new gear. But the decision was made to reduce Canada's contribution to NATO even after all the above decisions had been made.

Closing Months

The decision was taken, after much concern about the costs of HMCS BONAVENTURE's mid-life refit, to carry on with operations and plans were finalized for the 1970 NATO Exercise PEACEKEEPER. Despite the foreboding words about the demise of the carrier as a cash saving measure, the ship continued to make her contribution. The ship called in Holland and then went to Oslo, Norway and finally, back to sea for more exercises. These exercises were with the Canadian Task Group including HMCS PROVIDER, the Seventh Squadron ships ASSINIBOINE, OTTAWA and MARGAREE and the Fifth Squadrons' TERRA NOVA, ST. LAURENT, and FRASER. They were soon joined by the First Squadrons ships HMCS KOOTENAY and HMCS SAGUENAY. All of these ships were exercised while proceeded into the North Atlantic past the Shetland Island and Faroe Islands where they where, as the Commanding Officer said;

"Tied up with the "other guys" (Russians) at sea and in the air".

Despite disturbing news concerning air squadron postings and cutbacks received when the carrier returned to Portsmouth, England, it was home to Halifax. The year 1969 was completed with a short trip to Boston but without any aircraft on board.

In 1970 HMCS BONAVENTURE was still operational as a support ship and carried six SEA KINGS of HS-50 and a rescue helicopter from HU-21 (PEDRO). Maintenance and logistical support was provided to destroyers which had additional SEA KING helicopters on board. Trips were made to Jamaica and to Narvik, Norway, the latter in the role of Army and replenishment support but not in the aircraft carrier role.

When the ship returned from Norway many ideas surfaced as to what could be done with the ship including the suggestion that she could be converted into a gambling casino-ship or perhaps a

convention center. It was with considerable satisfaction that this nonsense ended and a decision was finally made to sell the ship for scrap

The objective of this narrative is two-fold. The first to record, in precis form, the operational history of the two Royal Navy carriers for which the RCN provided the ships crew while the RN provided its Air Branch and supporting Air Engineering personnel. The second objective is to record the operational history of the RCN carriers operated in the period 1947 to 1970. The latter two aircraft carriers HMCS MAGNIFICENT and HMCS BONAVENTURE formed the core of the RCN's contribution to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in the same period.

The mid-life refit of HMCS BONAVENTURE was undertaken so this NATO commitment could continue until the late 1970's. However a Cabinet decision resulted in the removal of the aircraft carrier from service. After stripping the ship of specialized equipment, aircraft landing aids and other equipment of value, the ship was sold for scrap

As a consequence the RCN ceased to be involved in aircraft carrier operations.

**COMMANDING OFFICERS
OF
CANADIAN AIRCRAFT CARRIERS**

<u>Officers</u>	<u>From</u>	<u>To</u>
HMCS NABOB Captain H.N. Lay, OBE, RCN	October 1943	September 1944
HMCS PUNCHER Captain R.E.S. Bidwell	April 1944	January 1946
HMCS WARRIOR Captain F.L. Houghton CBE, RCN Commodore H.G. DeWolfe CBE, DSO, DSC, RCN	January 1946 January 1947	January 1947 March 1948
HMCS MAGNIFICENT Commodore H.G. DeWolfe, CBE, DSO, DSC, RCN Commodore G.R. Miles, OBE, RCN Commander A.G. Boulton, DSC, RCN Commodore K.F. Adams, RCN Captain K.L. Dyer, DSC, CD, RCN Commodore H.S. Rayner, DSC and Bar, CD, RCN Captain A.H.G. Storrs, DSC and Bar, CD, RCN Captain A.B.F. Fraser Harris, DSC and Bar, CD, RCN	April 1948 August 1948 June 1949 September, 1949 October 1951 March 1953 January 1955 August 1956	August 1948 June 1949 September 1949 October 1951 March 1953 January 1955 August 1956 June 1957
HMCS BONAVENTURE Captain H.V.W. Groos, CD, RCN Captain W.M. Landymore, OBE, CD, RCN Captain J.C. O'Brien, CD, RCN Captain F.C. Frewer, CD, RCN Captain R.W. Timbrell, DSC, CD, RCN Captain H.A. Porter, CD, RCN Commander A.T. Bice Cd, RCN Captain R.H. Falls, CD, RCN Captain J.H. Cutts, CD, RCN Commander H.V. Vondette, CD, RCN	January 1957 January 1958 September 1959 August 1961 August 1963 August 1963 April 1965 August 1966 November 1966 March 1969 January 1970	January 1958 September 1959 August 1961 August 1963 March 1965 July 1966 November1966 March 1969 January 1970 July 1970

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