

Canada's Aircraft Carriers



HMCS MAGNIFICENT

HMCS MAGNIFICENT - Served With the RCN from 1948 to 1957. Shown here off Jetty 4, Halifax Dockyard.
Aircraft Carriers - World War II

HMS NABOB

Laid down as the merchant vessel Edisto, but converted to an aircraft carrier while building, she was commissioned HMS NABOB in Tacoma, Wash., on September 7, 1943. After working up, she entered Burrard drydock at Vancouver on November 1 for modification to RN standards, completing January 12, 1944. About this time it was arranged that she and a near-sister Puncher, should be manned largely by Canadians while remaining RN ships. In February she embarked 852 Squadron (FAA) of Avengers at San Francisco and sailed for the U.K. via New York, where she took aboard a flight-deck cargo of Mustangs for the RAF. She joined the British Home Fleet at Scapa Flow on August 1, and that month took part in two operations off the Norwegian coast, the second being an attack on the Tirpitz. On August 22 Nabob was torpedoed by U 354 in the Barents Sea, resulting in a hole some 32 feet square abaft the engine room and below the waterline. Amazingly, she made Scapa under her own power on August 27, but was not considered worth repairing and was paid off at Rosyth on October 10. She left there in 1947 to be broken up in Holland, but was resold and converted for merchant service, emerging in 1952

as the German MV Nabob. Sold Panamanian in 1967 and renamed GLORY, she was broken up in Taiwan in 1978.

HMS PUNCHER

Begun as MV Willapa, she was commissioned HMS Puncher at Tacoma, Wash., on February 5, 1944, and arrived at Vancouver on March 15 for modification to RN standards. She left Esquimalt in June for Norfolk, Va., enroute ferrying motor launches from New Orleans to New York. In July she left Norfolk for Casablanca with a cargo of 40 USAAF aircraft, returning to Norfolk to load the Corsairs of 845 (RN) Squadron and a deckload of U.S. aircraft for the U.K. On February 1, 1945, she joined the Home Fleet, and following VE-Day was used for several months for deck landing training. In September she was partially converted to serve as a troop carrier and employed the rest of the year repatriating Canadian troops from Britain. In 1946 she left Halifax for Norfolk and was paid off there January 16 for return to the USN. Converted for merchant service, she became the British Muncaster Castle in 1949, later to be renamed Bardic in 1954 and Bennevis in 1959. She was broken up in Taiwan in 1973.

Canadian manned but commissioned as RN ships. Carried about 20 aircraft with a crew of 1,000 and a maximum speed of 18 kts. Armament consisted of 2-5" guns, 16-40mm bofors and 20-20mm pom-poms.

Ship Name (Click for Image) Pen

Ship Name	Builder	Laid	Down	Launched	Commissioned	Paid Off	Remarks
NABOB	D77	ST	20 Oct 42	9 Mar 43	7 Sep 43	30 Sep 44	Displacement 15,390 tonnes.
PUNCHER	D79	ST	21 May 43	8 Nov 43	5 Feb 44	16 Jan 46	Displacement 15,700 tonnes.

Post War Carriers - 1946 to 1970

Active consideration of an expanded role for Canada in the Pacific war began as early as May, 1944, and it was agreed that larger ships would be required than any then serving in the RCN. The Canadian Naval Staff favoured returning the escort aircraft carriers Nabob and Puncher, then on loan from the RN, and taking over light fleet carriers in their place. Two of these, WARRIOR and MAGNIFICENT, were offered on loan (with option to purchase) in January, 1945, and arrangements were concluded in May, but neither ship had been completed by VJ-Day. WARRIOR was finally commissioned at Belfast on January 24, 1946, arriving at Halifax on March 31 with the Seafires and Fireflies of 803 and 825 Squadrons. Unsited for an eastern Canadian winter, she was transferred to Esquimalt in November.

Reductions in defence spending soon made it evident that the RCN would be able to afford only

one carrier, and it was decided to exchange WARRIOR for the slightly larger MAGNIFICENT. WARRIOR accordingly returned to the East coast in February 1947, where she was engaged most of the year in sea training and, latterly, in preparations for her return to the RN. In February, 1948, she arrived at Belfast, where she transferred stores to MAGNIFICENT and, on March 23, was paid off. She served in the RN until 1958, when she was sold to Argentina and renamed Independencia.

Magnificent, a near-sister to WARRIOR, had been launched at Belfast six months after her, in November, 1944. She was commissioned on April 7, 1948, and spent the ensuing nine years in an unceasing round of training cruises and exercises, visiting such far-flung ports as Oslo, Havana, Lisbon, and San Francisco, and taking part in large-scale NATO manoeuvres such as "Mainbrace" and "Mariner" in 1952 and 1953. On December 29, 1956, she left Halifax for Port Said, carrying a deckload of 233 vehicles as well as 406 army personnel and stores as Canada's contribution to the UN Emergency Force in the Middle East. "Maggie" sailed from Halifax for the last time on April 10, 1957, to be paid off at Plymouth on June 14. After being laid up for eight years there she arrived at Faslane, Scotland, in July, 1965, for breaking up.

When the Suez crisis erupted, MAGNIFICENT had just completed landing stores for her successor, a more modern carrier whose construction had been suspended in 1946. The successor's name was to have been HMS Powerful, but the RCN decided to rename her BONAVENTURE after the bird sanctuary in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Work on this ship had stopped three months after her launching in February, 1945, with the result that when construction resumed in 1952, improvements could be built into her. The most notable of these was the angled flight deck, which provided a longer landing run without sacrificing forward parking space, and permitted the removal of the unpopular crash barrier. Also noteworthy were a steam catapult and a mirror landing sight, the latter going far toward eliminating human error in landing.

The "Bonnie" was commissioned at Belfast on January 17, 1957, and arrived at Halifax on June 26, carrying on deck an experimental hydrofoil craft that was to serve in the development of HMCS Bras d'Or. Unlike her predecessors, BONAVENTURE had Banshee jet fighters and Tracker A/S aircraft as her complement. Like them, she enjoyed a busy career of flying training and participation in A/S and tactical exercises with ships of other NATO nations. What was expected to be her mid-life refit, carried out from 1966 to 1967, took 16 months and cost over \$11 Million. This cost proved to be too high for Canada's Navy, as she was paid off in 1970, and sold for scrap.

All of this class carried 30 aircraft and had a maximum speed of 24 kts.

Ship Name	Pendant	Builder	Laid Down	Launched	Commissioned	Paid Off	Remarks
HMCS BONAVENTURE	22	HW	27 Nov 43	27 Feb 45	17 Jan 57	1 Jul 70	Ex-RN HMS POWERFUL. Displacement 16,000 tonnes. Armed with 4x3" (2 barrelled) guns plus 8x40mm bofor.
HMCS MAGNIFICENT	21	HW	29 Jul 43	16 Nov 44	7 Apr 48	14 Jun 57	

Ex-RN HMS MAGNIFICENT. Displacement 15,700 tonnes. Armed with 3x3" (2 barrelled) guns plus 18x40mm bofor.

HMCS WARRIOR 31 HW 12 Dec 42 20 May 44 24 Jan 46 23 Mar 48

Ex-RN HMS WARRIOR. Displacement 13,350 tonnes. Armed with 24-2pdr (6 x IV) guns plus 19x40mm bofor.

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