



CANADA AVIATION AND SPACE MUSEUM
HMCS BONAVENTURE - CVL 22
AND HER AIRCRAFT
1957 - 1970



By Robert T. Murray
Canada Aviation and Space Museum Research Volunteer

Royal Canadian Navy Aircraft Carrier
Her Majesty's Canadian Ship Bonaventure – CVL 22
21 January 1957 – 3 July 1970

Introduction

In April 1962, the Canadian Government approved the acquisition of an aircraft carrier to replace Her Majesty's Canadian Ship (HMCS) *Magnificent* (CVL 21), which had been on loan and was to be returned to the Royal Navy (RN). At the same time, a decision was taken to purchase and modernize an unfinished Second World War era aircraft carrier. The Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) set up a negotiating team to deal with the British Government and the Royal Navy. The RN argued that the contract to purchase the new carrier required that HMCS *Magnificent* be brought up to the latest "alterations and additions" (A&As) for her class before her return to the RN. These alterations were to include, among other modifications, an angled and strengthened deck. The RCN's case was that these were modernizations and not A&As. Furthermore, the carrier being offered for purchase was being bought "as is", therefore the RN must accept the return of HMCS *Magnificent* in an "as is" state. The Royal Navy was won over to the Canadian's point of view and the negotiations were soon completed. A new project office for the Principal Royal Canadian Navy Technical Representative was established at Belfast, Northern Ireland, where the partially completed *Majestic* class, Light Fleet aircraft carrier, the ex-Her Majesty's Ship (HMS) *Powerful* (R 95) was laying.

Specifications

With a length overall of 215 meters (705 ft) and a beam at the water line of 24 meters (79 ft), HMS *Powerful* was only slightly larger than HMCS *Magnificent*. Her hull had been first laid down in November 1943, but with the knowledge that the allies would be victorious in the war, completion of the ship was suspended following its launch in 1945. Completion work resumed in July 1952 with Canada's official purchase of the British-built carrier, HMS *Powerful*. The ship had been redesigned to enable operation of modern fixed-wing aircraft by incorporating a 7.5 degree angled deck equipped with a steam catapult for launching aircraft. Improved arrester gear and a mirror landing system would enable safe recovery of her aircraft and her strengthened deck and aircraft lifts (elevators) would facilitate deck handling. Her anti-aircraft defences consisted of four twin, fully automatic, US pattern 3-inch/50-calibre guns. This term describes a deck-mounted gun that has a 3-inch bore.

What's In a Name? Selecting a new name for this, Canada's only aircraft carrier was not taken lightly. The aircraft carriers that Canada had previously used on loan from the British (*Nabob*, *Puncher*, *Warrior* and *Magnificent*) had carried over their Royal Navy names. A name more readily identified with Canada was desired. Two cruisers had been named for Canadian provinces, Ontario and Quebec, so the name "Canada" was considered. However, it was recalled that Nazi Germany had changed the name, *Deutschland*, of one of its ships for fear of the effect on morale if it was sunk in combat. How would it look if HMCS *Canada* were to sink? On 10 December 1952, her new name was announced as HMCS *Bonaventure* (CVL 22), a name of some repute in the Royal Navy and the name of an island bird sanctuary in the St. Lawrence River. When HMCS *Magnificent* was in service, her nickname was "Maggie", so naturally HMCS *Bonaventure* became affectionately known as "Bonnie". Her historic motto "Non Por Nos Toz Seus", meaning in English, "Not For Ourselves Alone", was appropriate to the world situation.

Electronics & Propulsion. HMCS *Bonaventure* had some three million dollars worth of electrical equipment delivered for installation, including some two million dollars worth of gun-fire controls and radar units. She, like HMCS *Magnificent*, was fitted with one, three-bladed propulsion screw and one four-bladed screw to reduce vibration when underway.

“Bonnie’s” Aircraft. Fixed-wing aircraft to be carried on *Bonaventure* would initially include the McDonnell F2H-3 *Banshee* that had been purchased from the United States Navy (USN) for the fighter operational role. Next came the Canadian-built version of Grumman’s S2F *Tracker* anti-submarine warfare (ASW) aircraft. Rotary-winged types included the Sikorsky HO4S-3 helicopters of HS 50. A single Sikorsky HO4S-3 helicopter from HU 21 was embarked for plane guard duties. “Plane Guard” described a ship or helicopter that always accompanied an aircraft carrier and was available for all take-off and recovery operations, to be ready to respond to any launch or recovery mishap. Later, the Sikorsky CHSS-2 *Sea King* helicopter tasked also with the anti-submarine warfare role was added to the ship’s roster. Full power trials of “Bonnie” were carried out and the vessel’s flight deck was certified for use for both day and night operations.



F2H-3 Banshee (Bill Upton Collection)



CS2F Tracker (CASM Collection)



HO4S of HS 50 and HU 21 (CASM Collection)



CHSS-2 Sea King (CF Photo PCN68-558)

Other Carrier Options. Before HMCS *Bonaventure* was commissioned, there was some talk of Canada buying additional aircraft carriers. At one point, consideration was given to purchasing a United States Navy *Essex*-class aircraft carrier for 4.4 million US dollars. In 1952, the Canadian Defence Liaison Staff had pressed for the purchase of the new Royal Navy HMS *Hermes* (R12), an advanced light fleet carrier. Neither proposal went forward. In 1986, after a very distinguished career, including armed operations during the 1982 Falklands War, HMS *Hermes* was sold to India and renamed Indian Naval Ship (INS) *Viraat* (R22)

Commissioning HMCS *Bonaventure*. Plans to commission “Bonnie” in autumn of 1956 were delayed to permit workmanship standards to be evaluated throughout and pre-commissioning trials to be carried out. The new commissioning date was set for 17 January 1957 under her first Commanding Officer, Captain Harold V.W. Gross, RCN. Getting the crew ready for *Bonaventure*’s commissioning proved to be difficult. It had been intended to transfer most of the crew from the experienced members of HMCS *Magnificent*. However, “Maggie” was now involved in a United Nations (UN) operation in the Suez Canal zone, where it had transported Canadian Army personnel and their vehicles on peace-keeping operations. Therefore, three hundred new crewmembers were flown from Canada to supplement the one hundred RCN personnel, who were busy making things ready in Belfast. The newly arrived crewmembers were accommodated at Royal Air Force (RAF) Station *Bishops*, located just outside of Belfast as they could not be accommodated aboard *Bonaventure*. The final inspection of the ship was begun before signing the D448 Acceptance Form. Many deficiencies were found, including filthy engine room bilges, incomplete aviation fuel systems and incomplete catapult assemblies. Resolution of these problems was begun and, on 17 January 1957, the ship was ready for commissioning.

The Navy White Ensign was raised and the guard of honour was inspected by the Honourable Ralph Campney, then Minister of National Defence. Mrs. Campney officially christened the ship and unveiled the ship “Battle Honours”. However, the next day, the White Ensign came down and the ship was returned to the builders to complete alterations as prescribed in the contract. While 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 477 previously identified defects. In due course, all outstanding issues were resolved and the ship was accepted for sea trials.

Operations – 1957

Following full-power sea trials, “Bonnie” moved to Portsmouth to load stores and ammunition. She visited various ports en route and conducted flying trials. Flying operations included launching and recovering two Hawker *Sea Hawks*, and two Fairey *Gannets* of the Fleet Air Arm (FAA), two RCN de Havilland Canada CS2F *Trackers* and two McDonnell F2H-3 *Banshees* from VX 10. The RCN aircraft were flown from HMCS *Shearwater* over the Atlantic to Royal Navy Air Station (RNAS) *Ford*. The *Sea Hawks* were the first jet aircraft to land aboard *Bonaventure*. The *Gannet* was a large, contra-rotating turboprop anti-submarine aircraft, which the RN and the British Government had hoped to sell to the RCN as they had done with Australia and Germany. In addition to loading stores and ammunitions at HM Dockyard, at Portsmouth, she loaded a special piece of cargo. Stowed covered on deck adjacent to the island was an experimental Saunders Roe hydrofoil, the predecessor to HMCS *Bras D’Or*, built in the United Kingdom for the Defence Research Board. *Bonaventure* then sailed for Halifax on 19 June and while en route exercised with a Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) Lockheed P2V *Neptune* ASW aircraft.

On her arrival in Halifax, HMCS *Bonaventure* received a tumultuous welcome by many dignitaries, including the Lieutenant-Governor of Nova Scotia, 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 the compass platform.

The remainder of 1957 was devoted to smoothing the wrinkles out of the ship’s operations and getting the aircrew ready for flying operations prior to being involved in North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) exercises.

Following a ten-day work-up in St. Margaret's Bay, Nova Scotia, *Bonaventure* sailed on her first flying training exercise. Ten RCN *Tracker* pilots had qualified two months previous onboard the USS *Wasp* (CV 18) that also had an angled deck and employed mirror landing aids similar to those on the "Bonnie". Now the Canadian pilots were ready to apply their new skills on their own carrier. In June, operational squadron, VS 880 had received its allocation of CS2F *Tracker* aircraft, followed later by VS 881 in September. The *Trackers* attached to VS 880 sported the letter 'A' on the tail above the fin flash while those of VS 881 squadron wore the letter 'B'.



VS 880 'A' *Trackers* lined up on *Bonaventure*. (via CASM)



CS2F *Trackers* of VS 881 'B' fly in formation. (via CASM)

Training with the Royal Navy. On 17 October, the Senior Canadian Officer Presently Afloat (Atlantic) (SCOA(A)), Commodore (Cmdre) Jeffrey V. Brock, DSO, DSC, CD, RCN, joined the ship with his staff. HMCS *Bonaventure* with CS2F *Trackers* and F2H-3 *Banshees* embarked and accompanied by HMCS *Ottawa* (DDH 229) as plane guard, began a cruise to the United Kingdom. Exercises were conducted en route Belfast, Ireland, including the launching and recovery of a RCAF Sikorsky H-34 (S-58) helicopter from a temporary flight deck erected onboard HMCS *Ottawa*. Prior to entering Belfast for a five-day visit, *Bonaventure's* aircraft were flown ashore to the Royal Naval Aircraft Repair Yard (RNARY) *Sydenham*. From the 4 to 9 November flying operations were conducted in the Londonderry Exercise Area. During these flying operations, three British Army observation aircraft, Auster AOP 9s, landed on *Bonaventure's* deck, becoming "carrier qualified". Beginning 11 November, *Bonaventure*, with HMCS *Ottawa* in company, participated in a four-day convoy and ASW exercise with HMS *Whitby*, *Hardy* and *Scarborough* and the Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) *Monarch*.



Banshee 126390 of VF 870 about to trap on *Bonnie*. (CASM)

On 17 November, after a two day stay in Belfast, *Bonaventure* and *Ottawa* joined with the ships of the First and Third Canadian Escort Squadrons and exercised en route to Canada arriving in Halifax on 29 November.

Exercise "BEAVER DAM". This was the ship's first official ASW exercise, beginning on 4 December. HMCS *Bonaventure*, in company with four RCN destroyers, HMCS *St. Laurent*, *Ottawa*, *Haida* and *Micmac*, formed Task Group (TG) 301.0.

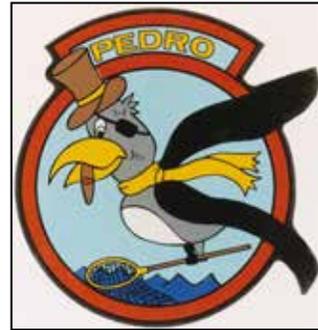
During Exercise "BEAVER DAM", *Bonaventure* embarked ten RCN CS2F *Trackers* of anti-submarine squadron VS 881 and five HO4S-3 helicopters of anti-submarine helicopter squadron HS 50. However, because of low visibility conditions, the flying operations were much reduced.

Operations – 1958

The year 1958 brought a change of command, Atlantic, Caribbean and Mediterranean cruises. Full power trials, underway refueling and ASW exercises with other NATO carriers. It also saw the loss of two aircraft and their crews.

Change of Command. On 15 January 1958, Captain William "Bill" M. Landymore, OBE, CD, RCN assumed command of HMCS *Bonaventure* from Captain H.V.W. Gross, CD. RCN.

After loading stores, *Bonaventure* departed 20 January for Bermuda and the Caribbean exercise areas with ten CS2F *Trackers* from VS 881, six HO4S-3 helicopters from HS 50 and one HO4S-3 helicopter from HU 21 for plane guard duties embarked. HMCS *Sioux* was in company as the plane guard (destroyer). The plane guard helicopter was affectionately known by all on the carrier by its unique callsign, "Pedro". "Pedro's" primary task was to be attendant on each launch and recovery of "Bonnie's" aircraft, to rescue aircrew forced to ditch during these critical phases of flight. Full power trials of the ship were carried out and the flight deck was certified for use for both day and night operations. For the first time in RCN history, flying and fuelling operations were conducted simultaneously with the carrier providing fuel to HMCS *Sioux* and three accompanying escorts (HMCS *Nootka*, *Algouguin* and *Micmac*) using the abeam and astern methods of fuel transfer.



"ASWEX 1-58". This was a work-up period with "ASWEX 1-58", a joint RCN/USN ASW exercise that involved three units. One was a convoy with a screen destroyer, HMCS *Bonaventure* and her screen, and the USN aircraft carrier USS *Leyte* with its own screening destroyers. They transited an area on four occasions while being subjected to attack by a number of USN submarines, including one nuclear submarine, the USS *Seawolf*. On completion of the exercise, *Bonaventure* was brought alongside at Mayport, Florida, to exchange her ASW helicopters for the RCN *Banshee* jets of fighter squadron VF 871. In company with HMCS *Nootka* as plane guard, the ships sailed for Charleston, South Carolina, during which her aircraft carried out carrier qualification (Carqual) training.

Exercise "MAPLE ROYAL 1". Sailing from Charleston on 3 March, "Bonnie" proceeded to its next exercise area to take part in Exercise "MAPLE ROYAL 1", a co-ordinated NATO ASW exercise conducted from 10 to 14 March providing practice in many aspects of naval warfare. Shortly after the commencement of the exercise, troubles were experienced with the ship's arrester gear, which required the replacement of four wires. Then, two *Banshee* fighters were lost, resulting in fatalities to their pilots. *Banshee* serial number 126428 was the first RCN *Banshee* lost at sea while en route to the carrier from Mayport, Florida. The other was the result of a deck-landing incident. In the latter accident, *Banshee* 126303 (142) made a normal recovery but when taxiing out of the arrester wires, experienced brake failure, swerved, and went over the port side of the ship and landed inverted in the water. The pilot ejected from the aircraft but in the attempt he was injured and rendered unconscious. HMCS *Haida*, the plane guard destroyer, was quickly on the scene and picked up the pilot but he eventually succumbed to his injuries.

Off Bermuda, *Bonaventure* joined the British Home Fleet and cross-operated her aircraft with the RN *Centaur*-class carrier HMS *Bulwark* (R08). “Bonnie” launched and recovered a flight of Royal Navy de Havilland *Sea Venoms* and Hawker *Sea Hawks* while HMS *Bulwark* recovered *Bonaventure*’s CS2F aircraft and carried out “touch and goes” with the F2H-3 *Banshees*.

Exercise “MAPLE ROYAL II”. This NATO ASW exercise commenced on 18 March with the fleet under Canadian tactical command of Cmdre. J.V. Brock in HMCS *Bonaventure*. During this exercise, the value of cross-carrier operating technique was proved when HMS *Bulwark* recovered two RCN *Tracker* aircraft. *Bonaventure*’s deck had become fouled when a *Tracker*’s port wheel went over the deck edge during a night recovery. This was in part due to the previous loss of some arrestor wires. Exercise “MAPLE ROYAL I and II” were the largest peacetime naval air exercises to date and, since it was commanded by Canadians, it showed the growth in stature of the RCN in the NATO forces.

Exercises “GRAND BANKS III” & “NEW BROOM VIII”. April 1958 brought more convoy / ASW exercises starting with Exercise “GRAND BANKS III”. A twelve-day period commencing on 14 April saw yet another Exercise, “NEW BROOM VIII”. At first, poor flying weather limited activity, but as weather improved, Captain Landymore was determined to make more use of *Bonaventure*’s aircraft. His view was that the ship was a large financial commitment and that it should perform at a higher level of efficiency. 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’s carrier efficiency.

Refit, Saint John Dry-Dock and Shipbuilding Company. When the “Bonnie” returned to Halifax, she was de-fuelled, all ammunition was removed and her boilers were cleaned. This was accomplished prior to her departure, on 10 May, for a fourteen-week refit at the Saint John Dry Dock and Shipbuilding Company in Saint John, New Brunswick.



With all of her aircraft still offloaded, HMCS Bonaventure returns to Halifax following her long refit. (DND Photo)

Following the completion of this refit, HMCS *Bonaventure* returned to Halifax, on 21 August, and went alongside the new purpose-built carrier jetty at the Naval Air Station (NAS) *Shearwater*. Flying training commenced on 8 September for VF 871 *Banshees* and VS 881 *Trackers* in the Halifax / Grand Banks areas.

Exercise “MEDASWEX 26”. On 7 October, with the broad pendant of Cmdre. M.A. Medland, CD, RCN flying, the carrier with VS 881 and HS 50 embarked, sailed for the Mediterranean with



Four HO4S helicopters of HS 50 recover to Bonaventure during MEDASWEX. (via CASM)

four destroyers in company – HMCS *St. Laurent, Ottawa, Huron* and *Haida*. “Bonnie” encountered Hurricane “Janice” in the Straits of Gibraltar, which produced winds up to 60 knots (111 km/h). She then anchored in Gibraltar with her escorts and all units took on fuel. On 22 October, the Task Force then sailed for Grand Harbour, Malta, to await the commencement of Exercise “MEDASWEX 26” (Mediterranean Anti-Submarine Warfare Exercise 26). During this exercise, which commenced on 27 October, British, Canadian and Italian navy warships operated together and,

though the weather was poor, their aircraft flew a creditable number of hours and were successful in hunting “enemy” submarines. The exercise ended on 1 November when the ships entered Grand Harbour. “Bonnie” and her escorts sailed again on 3 November for a five-day visit to Naples, Italy and a two-day visit to Toulon, France. There, the ships’ companies had some R&R time before commencing Exercise “MEDASWEX 27” on 14 November.

Exercise “MEDASWEX 27”. The short stay in port proved interesting but expensive, and it was off to sea again for “MEDASWEX 27”. Unfortunately, a *Tracker* developed a tail hook problem – a failure that had occurred before. This caused the carrier to drop out of the exercise. In addition, it was discovered that the flight deck arrester gear required overhaul. While “Bonnie” set sail for Gibraltar, her *Trackers* were flown off to RAF Station *North Front*, Gibraltar, to await repairs to the carrier. Because the flight deck could not be used to recover aircraft until the arrester gear was repaired, the *Trackers* were flown to the United States Air Force (USAF) Base, *Shepherds Grove*, Suffolk, England via Lisbon, Portugal, and Bordeaux, France. HMCS *Bonaventure* sailed to Portsmouth with her escorts and units of the Royal Navy, German, French and Portuguese navies for Exercise “SHARP SQUALL” on 24 November. The arrester wire problem was resolved at Portsmouth where the dockyard staff determined that an incorrect hydraulic fluid was being used. Following the arrester gear repairs, *Bonaventure* sailed for home, recovering her aircraft from RAF Station *St. Mawgans*, Cornwall, where they had been relocated from *Shepherds Grove*. En route home, an active flying programme was carried out. *Bonaventure* arrived in Halifax on 15 December and secured alongside at *Shearwater*.

Operations – 1959

The year 1959 was a year of many gains and some losses, causes for celebration, and causes for sorrow. Arrester gear problems continued to plague the ship, but training and carrier qualifications continued despite the loss of arrester gear wires and stormy seas. Anti-submarine exercises continued to train aircrews in this vital role, as the ship became more efficient in flying operations. With a new coat of paint, “Bonnie” had the distinction of taking part in two international commemorative ceremonies as well as playing a vital role in the visit of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II to Canada. The loss of two of the ship’s aircraft was the cause of great sorrow when four crewmembers lost their lives.

Exercises “BEAVERDAM III” & “NEW BROOM IX”. In early January 1959, VS 880 deck qualified yet again while the carrier was en route the United States Naval Operating Base (USNOB) Bermuda. Also on board were five HS 50 Sikorsky HO4S-3s and one Bell HTL-6, on loan from HU 21, for ASW training in the Bermuda Operations Area. February, however, was a trying time for the ship’s crew. Bad weather, including snow and gale-force winds, rough seas, and cold burst pipes plagued the ship on its way to Bermuda. Out of Bermuda, arrester gear troubles occurred when a *Tracker*’s tail hook caught two wires on landing, breaking one. The “Bonnie” had to return to Bermuda to sort out the cable problem before returning to sea.

More arrester gear cable damage caused *Bonaventure* to return to Halifax on 16 February, because there were insufficient cables left on board to safely conduct deck landings. Following repairs to the cables, “Bonnie” returned to sea on 4 March to embark HS 50, in Bermuda and for Exercise “BEAVERDAM III” in the Sable Island area, returning to Halifax on 15 March. The next day, *Banshee* squadrons VF 870 and VF 871 amalgamated to form simply squadron VF 870. On 25 March, “Bonnie” sailed for Norfolk, Virginia with HMCS *Algonquin*, *St. Croix*, *Athabaskan* and *Nootka* for NATO Exercise “NEW BROOM IX” and the 10th anniversary of NATO ceremonies.

During “NEW BROOM IX”, conducted from 2-16 April, CS2F *Tracker* 1527 and its four-man crew were lost during a night recovery in very adverse weather conditions. The plane guard destroyer USS *Rowe* (DD 564) immediately closed the crash spot but was unable to find any surviving crew. However, “Bonnie” continued and completed the three-phase exercise. *Bonaventure* returned to Norfolk on 4 April for celebrations associated with the tenth Anniversary of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. These celebrations included a 500 guest cocktail party aboard ship, receptions, and an Anniversary Ball given by the Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic (SACANT). *Bonaventure* and her escorts departed Norfolk en route Halifax, where they arrived on 10 April.

By this time, the carrier had attained the degree of efficiency envisioned by Captain Landymore and she proved her ability to keep a larger number of aircraft airborne during what was called sustained operations or “Sust Ops”. HMCS *Bonaventure* was able to keep four of her *Tracker* aircraft airborne around the clock on exercises, as well as two ASW helicopters airborne from dawn to dusk. This became *Bonaventure*’s claim to fame among the NATO navies, which, at times, were doing far less flying with much larger carriers.



Four Banshees of the famed VF 870 “Grey Ghosts” navy display team fly over HMCS Bonaventure in April. (CASM Photo)

In April, “Bonnie” sailed one more time to take the Minister of National Defence, the Chief of Air Staff, the Chief of Naval Staff and members of the RCAF Staff College to sea to view carrier operations. *Bonaventure* showed off all of her assets including touch-and-go F2H-3 *Banshee* landings; aerobatics by the “Grey Ghosts”; day and night CS2F *Tracker* operations; and jack-stay transfers from one ship to another. Senior staff was able to view these operations from the carrier’s decks and from one of the ship’s helicopters. The observers, duly impressed with the efficiency and effectiveness of the carrier and her aircraft, remained onboard overnight, returning to Halifax the following day.

It was time for *Bonaventure* to have a full paint job, so she sailed for Bermuda on 4 May. Cleaning and painting was carried out at the old RN Dockyard on Ireland Island. Captain Landymore, aware that the Netherlands Navy carrier, HNLMS *Karel Doorman* (R81), one of similar size to the “Bonnie”, had collided with the cement walls on her visit to Ireland Island on an earlier occasion, took the necessary steps to avoid the same fate when docking *Bonaventure*.

The ship's *Tracker* aircraft were disembarked to the US Air Force Base *Kindley Field*, and the HO4S-3 of HS 50 went to USNOB, Bermuda to continue training. Paintwork on the ship was completed without incident by 15 May and, with her aircraft embarked, *Bonaventure* in company with the frigates HMCS *Lanark* and *Swansea* sailed for San Juan, Puerto Rico.



Ten CS2F-1 Trackers of VS 880 'A' squadron, all with engines running, unfold wings and prepare to launch for an Exercise from the deck of HMCS *Bonaventure* sometime in early 1959. (CAvM Photo 16430)

With her sparkling new paint, “Bonnie” arrived in San Juan one week later, where there were a number of USN submarines in the harbour. It was agreed to exercise HMCS *Bonaventure* and her plane guard, HMCS *Fort Erie*, in anti-submarine warfare with these submarines. The Royal Navy submarine, HMSm *Ambush*, also in the area, provided additional exercise for *Bonaventure* while en route New York City to take part in state ceremonies – the celebrations of the 350th Anniversary of the arrival of Henry Hudson in his ship, “Half Moon”, in New York. On 11 June, a ceremonial parade was held through the streets of New York with troops of the United States Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines, and a Navy detachment from HMCS *Bonaventure* bringing up the rear. On return to Halifax on 13 June, and the disembarkation of the helicopters of HS 50, *Bonaventure* and her plane guard, HMCS *Crusader*, sailed on the 15th to take up Sea / Air Rescue Station Number 5, at latitude 50.15N, and longitude 43.30W. This was for the Atlantic crossing of the Queen's Flight en route a royal visit to Canada. The Royal Flight passed over the *Bonaventure* and *Crusader* on 18 June, after which the ships returned to Halifax.



On 12 September, Bonaventure changed Commanding Officers, at sea, with Captain John "Scruffy" C. O'Brien, CD, RCN, assuming command from Captain Landymore. The new Bonaventure Captain was a former executive officer in HMCS Magnificent (CVL 21) and was highly qualified to take over command of the ship. (CASM Photo)

The carrier remained alongside, In Halifax, until 12 September, when she sailed for arrester gear trials and carrier qualifications (Carquals). Priority was given to re-qualifying VF 870 *Banshee* pilots and 18 CS2F *Tracker* crew commanders, which had not flown to a ship's deck for a year. It was necessary to return to Halifax to check the flight deck arrester gear before continuing back to sea to deck qualify 12 *Tracker* pilots and the crew commanders. Before this could be completed, the ship had more arrester gear problems. By now, only one arrester wire out of the six deployed was serviceable but, aware of the need to join Exercise "SHARP SQUALL IV" in the United Kingdom (UK), the carrier sailed on 4 November anyway.

Exercise "SHARP SQUALL IV". On arriving in the UK, it was found that the air bottle for the catapult hydraulics was set at 250 psi in accordance with the manufacturer's handbook but the company had changed it to 500 psi. Re-set to the manufacturer's specifications, the flight deck arrester gear, except for the usual maintenance, was not to be a problem again. Catapult problems, however, continued to plague the ship. HMCS *Bonaventure* joined with HMCS *Algonquin*, *Athabaskan*, *Iroquois*, *Sioux* and ships of other NATO partners, UK, Denmark, Norway, and including the Netherlands aircraft carrier HNLMS *Karel Doorman*, for the NATO Exercise "SHARP SQUALL IV". Prior to the start of the exercises, the *Banshee* pilots needed to be qualified in night deck landings. During these qualifications, the fourth catapult shot failed to launch the aircraft with sufficient speed for flight thereby causing RCN *Banshee* 126400 to crash over the bow into the sea. The pilot was able to exit the jet and was subsequently rescued by the plane guard destroyer, HMCS *Athabaskan*. The resulting Board of Inquiry determined that the fault was in the catapult's operation. "Bonnie" set sail for Belfast for catapult repairs. Her *Banshees* were unloaded at RNARY in Belfast and then flown to RNAS *Yeovilton* for AAM-N-7 *Sidewinder* 1A air-to-air missile training. Over the course of this training, *Banshee* pilots managed to shoot down four unmanned Fairey *Firefly* drone aircraft with these new heat-seeking missiles.

HMCS *Bonaventure* proceeded to Portsmouth and then to sea for the Exercise "SHARP SQUALL IV", which included units of the French fleet. After the exercise, in late November, all ships returned Portsmouth. The ship's company entertained 71 orphans at a Christmas party with Santa coming aboard by helicopter. On 3 December, after recovering her *Banshees* from RNAS *Yeovilton*, the carrier sailed for Halifax. However, it was to be an arduous and long voyage. Bad weather required that the carrier and accompanying ships reduce speed.

"Bonnie's Storm". On 6 December, *Bonaventure*, along with her destroyer escorts HMCS *Algonquin*, *Athabaskan*, *Iroquois* and *Sioux* ran into a storm off Cape Finisterre, Spain, so severe it has gone down in maritime history as "Bonnie's Storm". Wind gusts of hurricane force and huge waves battered the ships. One wave, estimated at 20 meters (66 feet), stove in a window on the starboard side of the compass platform. The forward aircraft lift was wrenched downwards, allowing water to flood the aircraft hangar and some forward mess decks. Damage Control Parties managed to raise, and secure, the lift before more water got into the hangar that could have severely threatened the stability of the ship. Breaking seas also damaged the two aircraft landing mirrors and the after catwalk. Bow plates were stove in and all life rafts and ship's boats were washed away or crushed. The violence of the storm caused *Bonaventure* to heave to for twenty-four hours. She joined other ships in trouble in the English Channel, including the passenger liners RMS *Queen Elizabeth* and the SS *United States*. Two days later, when flying conditions permitted, *Bonaventure* launched two *Trackers* to exercise with the RN submarine HMSm *Alderney* before flying ashore. CS2F *Tracker* 1529 pitched up as it cleared the catapult. Completing an inadvertent loop, the *Tracker* started back down with insufficient altitude to recover and crashed into the sea alongside *Bonaventure*. The crew of four did not survive the impact.

Operations - 1960

Storm Damage Repair. A survey of the storm damage conducted at Halifax on "Bonnie's" arrival determined that the damage repair was beyond the dockyard's capabilities. On 6 January, the carrier sailed for the Saint John Drydock and Shipbuilding Company, for storm damage repair where it remained until 12 March. *Bonaventure's* sailing from Saint John was delayed once again by her nemesis, bad weather.

Exercise "WINTEX 60". On 14 January, while "Bonnie" was still in refit, six HO4S-3 helicopters from HS 50 and one Bell HTL-6 helicopter, on loan from HU 21, embarked aboard the Escort Maintenance Ship, HMCS *Cape Scott* (ARE 101). They proceeded en route USNOB *Bermuda* for Exercise "WINTEX 60" in the Bermuda Op area. ASW training continued until HS 50 returned to Halifax on 28 March aboard the *Cape Scott*.

Bonaventure returned to her *Shearwater* jetty on 14 March to replenish her supplies before sailing again on 22 March and recovering twelve *Trackers* of VS 880 before proceeding on her Carquals mission to qualify flight crews on carrier deck landings. "Bonnie" returned to Halifax on 3 April and sailed again three days later with VS 880 for work-ups and Carquals. HS 50 then joined the ship on 11 April. On 14 April, alerted by the *Shearwater* operations that *Tracker* 1510 was overdue from its training mission, "Bonnie" sailed at maximum speed toward the suspected crash area. By intercepting a message between two shore authorities, *Bonaventure* established a ditching position some 800 kms (500 miles) to the southeast. After sailing for about two hours at high speed, the carrier was advised that the US Coast Guard (USCG) had recovered the crew of the ditched *Tracker*. Carrier qualifications for all its pilots completed, "Bonnie" returned to Halifax.

Exercise “SHORTSTOP”. On 2 May, Exercise “SHORTSTOP” commenced and, between 4 and 17 May, trackers of VS 880 and helicopters of HS 50 flew 187 missions, accumulating 576.7 flying hours. This included a rescue mission to recover a civilian patient from a former USN helicopter carrier, the USS *Hoggatt Bay* (CVHE 75), under tow by a Dutch tug to a scrap yard. Several refueling operations conducted at sea during Exercise “SHORTSTOP” included HMCS *Haida*, *Nootka* and *Iroquois* taking on fuel from *Bonaventure*, and “Bonnie” herself taking on fuel from the USNS *Caloosahatchee*. The carrier then returned to Halifax on 17 May to take part in the RCN’s 50th Anniversary.

Golden Jubilee. The year 1960 was the Royal Canadian Navy’s 50th anniversary. Celebrating this event during the month of May kept *Bonaventure* and her crew very busy. She participated in sail pasts, open house entertainment and in a fleet regatta in Bedford Basin, a large enclosed bay forming the NW end of Halifax Harbour, where convoys of civilian and military ships had assembled during the Second World War. Ashore, the RCN trooped the Queen’s Colours with HMCS *Bonaventure* providing her share of the officers and men on parade for this occasion.



To honour the Golden Jubilee of the Royal Canadian Navy, some of the ship’s crew, assembled in their finest “dress blues”, are arranged on deck for this once-in-a-lifetime RCN celebratory salute. (CF Photo CT-795A)

On 26 May, *Bonaventure* with HMCS *Nootka* in company for plane guard duties began flying drills en route to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania where the carrier exchanged courtesies with the Commandant, Fourth Naval District. The return journey to Halifax provided more flying training until her arrival on 11 June.

Hosting the Commander-in-Chief. On 17 July, the carrier proceeded to Ingonish, Nova Scotia, where the ship and her crew had a very special mission assigned – to act as the host ship for their Excellencies, the Governor-General and Madame Georges P. Vanier, who were staying at the Province of Nova Scotia’s Keltic Lodge.

A Royal Salute was fired as the Vice-Regal Party disembarked from a 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. Proceeding on to Prince Edward Island, the ship anchored in Hillsborough Bay for the period of 18-19 July, while the Vice-Regal Party visited Charlottetown. In thick fog, the carrier sailed for St. John's, Newfoundland, but could not enter the harbour, nor anchor at sea, because of poor local weather conditions. Therefore, the Vice-Regal Party was transported by helicopter to the Torbay airport for their return journey to Ottawa. 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. (The order to "Splice the Main Brace" can only be given by a member of the Royal Family, the Governor-General of Canada or the Chief of Defence Staff. When the order is given, every member of the crew is entitled to a double "tot" for a job well done). Then, with full power trials being carried out en route, the carrier returned to Halifax, arriving there safely on 22 July. During her month at sea, HMCS *Bonaventure* had steamed 3,500 kilometers (2,174 miles).

At the end of July, *Bonaventure* entered refit at the Saint John Dry Dock and Shipbuilding Company and remained there until late October. During refit, the crew was sent on leave and attended courses at HMCS *Stadacona*, in Halifax. A C-45 *Expeditor* aircraft was allocated to *Bonaventure* for the duration of the refit to transfer freight and passengers and, to enable "Bonnie's" aviators to maintain their flying proficiency.

By 14 November, the carrier was once again ready for operational service and spent the next few weeks providing training for the *Trackers* of VS 880 Detachment One (Det. 1) and the *Banshee* fighters of VF 870. Instead of returning to her homeport, the carrier anchored in St. Margaret's Bay, a large body of water adjacent to Halifax, where she conducted ship-handling training. One such exercise in the training was heeling trials where the ship was made to tilt at extreme angles. Someone, observing from the nearby shore called the media to inform them that the carrier was sinking. This reminded the crew of Mark Twain's response to an inadvertent publication of his obituary when he said, "Reports of my death are greatly exaggerated." Then, from 26 November to 6 December 1960, HS 50 deployed five HO4S-3 ASW helicopters to Sydney, Nova Scotia, towards preparations for the upcoming Exercise "WINTEX 61".

Exercise "BONNY BOY". On 28 November, the carrier, with twelve *Trackers* of VS 880 and eight *Banshees* of VF 870 embarked, sailed for a five day port call to Boston, Massachusetts, commencing the first of December. "Bonnie" sailed again on 5 December accompanied by HMCS *Cayuga*, as the plane guard, for Exercise "BONNY BOY" in the Bay of Fundy. The exercise, conducted from 6-9 December, involved VF 870 in a ground support role in a war game between two fictitious armies. On 6 December, while towing a F2H-3 *Banshee* of VF 870 on the deck, a Weapons Technician with the Flight Deck Crew released the aircraft's 20mm breach block causing the gun to fire, hitting the back of the towing mule and the driver. The driver died in hospital a week later. Flying operations continued during *Bonaventure's* return to Halifax where she arrived on 15 December and secured alongside Dockyard Jetty 4 for the Christmas season.

Operations – 1961

The carrier remained in the Western Atlantic for the entire year with operations in the Bermuda and Caribbean Op Areas and along the United States coast. Two HS 50 HO4S-3s and a VF 870 F2H-3 *Banshee* were lost during the year.

Exercises “WINTEX 61” & “NEWBROOM X”. *Bonaventure* remained alongside in Halifax, where her Command and Control teams attended briefings and took part in tactical games at the Joint Maritime Warfare School (JMWS) until 24 January when she sailed for Exercise “WINTEX 61” in the Bermuda and Puerto Rico Op Areas. After a short period exercising in the Bermuda Op Area, *Bonaventure* sailed for Norfolk, Virginia to take part in a NATO ASW symposium and exercise between 10 and 14 February before returning to the Bermuda and then the Puerto Rico Op Areas. For the next six weeks, *Bonaventure* carried out ASW exercises with a brief six-day interruption for a R&R visit to San Juan. *Bonaventure* arrived back in the Halifax Op Area on 26 March for a three-day Carqual period with VF 870 prior to entering harbour on the 29th. The carrier was back to sea again on 5 April for a one-day power demonstration for the Honourable D.L. Harkness, Minister of National Defence. On completion of the demonstration *Bonaventure* returned to port and secured alongside the Shearwater jetty. *Bonaventure* was back to sea again on 14 April for NATO Exercise “NEWBROOM X” and a flying display for members of the Army Staff College. “Bonnie” returned to the Halifax Dockyard on 27 April for R&R and a self-maintenance period.

Joint RCN/USN Exercises. The carrier was back to sea again on 23 May for five days of flying training prior to a visit to the United States Naval Air Station (USNAS) *Quonset Point*, Rhode Island, and to take part in the local festivities. It was back to sea once again on the first day of June for another five days of flying training before entering New York, on 6 June, for six days of R&R. *Bonaventure*, with HMCS *Athabaskan* as plane guard, sailed again on 12 June, for operations with USN Task Force 83.8 consisting of the aircraft carrier USS *Essex* (CVS 9), five destroyers and two submarines as targets. With the operation completed *Bonaventure* and *Athabaskan* detached and returned to Halifax on 26 June. A sad note, on 16 June, VF 870 F2H-3 *Banshee* 126434 crashed near Peggy’s Cove, killing the pilot.

Exercises “RIPTIDE II” & “TARTON”. *Bonaventure* sailed on 7 July to partake in the NATO ASW Exercise “RIPTIDE II” off the Atlantic seaboard. On the third day of the exercise, Sikorsky HO4S-3 55320 254/4 ditched off the South Carolina coast. The crew of three were rescued by a USN destroyer escort, the USS *Van Voorhis* (DE 1028), then returned to *Bonaventure* by “Pedro”, the plane guard helicopter. The exercise terminated on 21 July when the participants entered Norfolk Harbour for a post-exercise “Wash Up”. The brief three-day stop in Norfolk was followed by Exercise “TARTON” from 24 to 28 July. On *Bonaventure*’s return to Halifax, she remained alongside for a self-maintenance period until the third week of September.

Aid to Civil Power. Although *Bonaventure* remained alongside in Halifax, her aircraft continued training at *Shearwater*. Two Sikorsky HO4S-3 helicopters were sent to Newfoundland to assist in fighting forest fires, raging in the eastern area of the province. On 11 August, HO4S-3 55886 255/5 crashed at Aspen Cove while transporting firefighters to and from the fires’ front lines. The crew and passengers survived and were returned to base.

Change of Command. Captain Frederick C. Frewer, CD, RCN, assumed command from Captain J.C. O’Brian on 29 August, while “Bonnie” was undergoing periodic maintenance in Halifax.

Exercises “JASWEX 3/61 & “TRAPLINE”. On 22 September, *Bonaventure* departed Halifax with a new Senior Canadian Officer Afloat (Atlantic) SCOA (A), Cmdre Michael G. Sterling, CD, RCN and Captain F. Frewer, CD, RCN in command, bound for exercises north of Newfoundland. Twelve CS2F *Trackers* of VS 880 Detachment One (Det 1), five Sikorsky HO4S-3 of HS 50 and one Sikorsky HO4S-3 of HU 21 (Det 1) were embarked for the ASW exercises. The carrier, with HMCS *Huron* and HMCS *Algonquin* in company, sailed for the Strait of Belle Isle for ASW training off the Labrador coast. Flying exercises began on the 25th September for the four-day Exercise “JASWEX 3/61”. At the conclusion of this exercise and an overnight stay at anchor in Hamilton Inlet, *Bonaventure* commenced Exercise “TRAPLINE” along the Labrador coast and into Ungava and Hudson Bays with the RN submarine HMSm *Aurochs*. “TRAPLINE” ended on 8 October and the ships set sail for Halifax arriving there on 13 October.

VS 880 and VF 879 Carquals. “Bonnie” sailed on the 23rd October for Carquals with the *Trackers* of VS 880 and *Banshees* of VF 870 embarked. Bad weather for the first few days precluded flying operations, but from 21 to 26 October, both squadrons had deck qualified their pilots. *Bonaventure* returned to port on 31 October.

Exercise “FALLEX 61”. On 6 November, HMCS *Bonaventure*, with VS 880 and HS 50 aboard, sailed south to the Bermuda exercise area, for “FALLEX 61”, her final ASW exercise during 1961. On completion of the exercise, *Bonaventure* set sail for Charleston, South Carolina for an eight-day visit. During her stay, the carrier and her escorts, HMCS *Colombia*, *Restigouche* and *Iroquois* participated in extensive local activities. While her escorts returned to Halifax, “Bonnie” paid a three-day visit to USNAS *Quonset Point*, Rhode Island between 8 and 10 December before returning to Halifax. This ended the year’s activities as her crew celebrated Christmas at home.

Operations – 1962

Following a five-week stay alongside in Halifax for the festive season, the carrier sailed for extensive flying operations in the Bermuda and Caribbean Op Areas. Later in the year, *Bonaventure* took part in a joint ASW Exercise “JASWEX 62” prior to going into refit at Lauzon, Quebec. From mid-September to mid-November she sailed for exercises in the Eastern Atlantic, took part in the rescue off Ireland of passengers and crew from a ditched Flying Tiger Line airliner and then visited a few European ports.

Exercise “SPRINGEX 62”. *Bonaventure* set sail on 22 January for Exercise “SPRINGEX 62” in the Bermuda and Puerto Rico Op Areas. On 5 February, VS 880 *Tracker* 1587 sustained moderate damage to its starboard wing and engine during a heavy landing onboard the carrier, curtailing any further flying activities. In mid-February, “Bonnie” entered San Juan for some R&R, and to paint the ship. Prior to entering port, the helicopters and *Trackers* were flown to the United States Coast Guard Station *Ilsa Grande*, San Juan, to continue flying operations. On returning to sea, “Bonnie” then continued flying operations in the Bermuda Op Area before returning to Halifax on 16 March.

Carquals and a Capabilities Show. HMCS *Bonaventure* sailed again on 9 April for Carquals with VS 880 and VX 10 off the Nova Scotia coast. Here was the opportunity to show off her aircraft’s flying capabilities for Vice Admiral H.S. Rayner, DSC & Bar, Chief of the Naval Staff (CNS) and Rear Admiral K.L. Dyer, DSC, CD, Flag Officer Atlantic Coast.



In April 1962, CS2F-2 Tracker 1595 of VS 880 performs a tie-down engine run on the deck of Bonaventure while at the bow, Sikorsky HO4S 876 is being checked over preparatory to its next flight. (Seth Grossmith Photo)



Sometime in April 1962, Tracker 1532 of VX 10 (with signature red 'X' and Fin Flash on tail) with its wings folded, is seen tied-down to the deck. Parked ahead is a Tracker of VS 880 (with the squadron's gold and black stripes and the White Ensign on the tail). Then, with their wings spread, all Trackers make ready for a mission. Tracker 1532 was destined to be the last CS2F to be launched from HMCS Bonaventure. (Seth Grossmith Photos)



In very much less than ideal weather conditions, a mass runup of all the VS 880 and single VX 10 (at rear) Trackers on deck is seen preparatory to the Carquals and capabilities being performed. (Seth Grossmith Photo)

10,000th Landing and Final Banshee Carrier Operations. On 16 April, a USN pilot on exchange with VS 880, flying CS2F *Tracker* 1550, made the 10,000th arrested deck landing on *Bonaventure*. The carrier returned to harbour on 18 April and remained alongside until 8 May when she sailed for Bermuda and Norfolk Op Areas for flying operations. On 10 May, a Carqual period was carried out with VU 32 and VF 870 when F2H-3 *Banshee* 126339 (339) carried out the final *Banshee* landing aboard *Bonaventure*. The carrier returned to Halifax on 26 May.

Exercise “JASWEX 62”. *Bonaventure* sailed 13 June for ASW exercises off the East Coast and Bermuda Op Areas. The carrier anchored in Grassy Bay, Bermuda for the exercise half time “Wash Up” and crew R&R, returning to Halifax on 29 June.

Exercise “FLEETEX 3” and Quebec City. The carrier was back to sea again on 3 July, accompanied by six escorts, for exercises with the British submarine HMSm *Alderney*. On completion of the Exercise, some *Tracker* aircraft were flown to L’Ancienne Lorette, Quebec City’s airport, to continue training exercises, while *Bonaventure* and crew visited Quebec City. The visit was a great success with much ceremony as the ship hosted some 16,000 visitors during “Open House” periods. A naval contingent from HMCS *Cornwallis*, a land-based training establishment in Nova Scotia, put on a stirring sunset ceremony on the jetty, adjacent to the carrier, to the delight of the public. Due for minor refit, *Bonaventure* returned to Halifax on 16 July.

Refit, Davie Shipyard Lauzon, Quebec. On completion of de-ammunitioning and de-storing ship, *Bonaventure* sailed for a one-month mini-refit at the Davie Shipyard. She returned to Halifax on 31 August to take on ammunition, Avgas, stores and to clean ship prior to sailing to Europe.

Banshee Wind Down. At HMCS *Shearwater*, the McDonnell F2H-3 *Banshee* jet fighters were winding down their operations. These fighter aircraft were originally acquired to provide fighter defence for the fleet against reconnaissance aircraft and bombers. Ashore, the *Banshee* had served well in maintaining the security of the East Coast of Canada under NORAD. The official Naval Headquarters statement claimed that,

“No satisfactory replacement jet fighter which could be operated from Bonaventure could be found”.

On 30 September, VF 870 and their F2H-3 *Banshee* aircraft were officially disbanded and retired. This was the end of the era of Canadian carrier-borne jet fighters.



RCN F2H Banshee 126295 ‘112’ with Sidewinders banks over its home at HMCS Shearwater. (Bill Upton Collection)



This forlorn lineup of former VF 870 Banshee fighters are being turned to scrap at HMCS Shearwater. (CASM)

Search and Rescue (SAR). *Bonaventure* departed Halifax for NATO exercises on 17 September en route Portsmouth and Rotterdam in company with five destroyers of CANCELOR ONE all under the command of SCOA(A), Cmdre W.M. Landymore. On 23 September, the fleet was alerted by Air Traffic Control, Shannon, Ireland of an aircraft emergency. An American Flying Tiger Line airliner, a Lockheed L-1049H-82 *Super Constellation*, on a Military Air Transport Service (MATS) charter flight, with 76 souls aboard, lost three engines approximately 805 kms (500 miles) west of Shannon and had to ditch, at night, in the cold, storm-tossed Atlantic Ocean.

A USAF Douglas DC-6 transport, en route New York from Prestwick, Scotland, was ordered to try and intercept the disabled *Super Connie* which it managed to sight just before it ditched. In addition, a Coastal Command, Avro *Shackleton* AEW aircraft from RAF Station, *St. Mawgan*, Cornwall, England and a USAF Grumman HU-16 *Albatross* from Prestwick arrived at the scene and marked the area with flares to guide several ships converging on the area. *Bonaventure*, with HMCS *Athabaskan* in company, was approximately 515 kms (320 miles) southeast of the crash site, and proceeded at full speed to the area. Four RCN CS2F *Trackers* were fitted with 20-man life rafts and launched, in the dark, to arrive at the crash site by first light.

The *Super Constellation* pilot, Captain John Murray (no relation to the author) ensured that all passengers and crew had safely evacuated the stricken aircraft. However, two of the aircraft's 25 person rafts were lost when one of the *Constellation's* wings was sheared as the aircraft hit the water and another life raft was lost, due to strong winds, leaving only one raft for 76 persons. The first vessel to arrive in the area was the Swiss freighter *Celerina*, en route to Antwerp, Belgium, who recovered 48 survivors and 3 bodies from the life raft.

Among the ships arriving at the site was a British weather ship from Weather Station *Juliette*, on station west of Ireland, that recovered 9 bodies which were sighted by the surveillance aircraft and the USCG cutter *Owasco* (WPG 39). *Bonaventure* arrived about noon at which time Cmdre Landymore assumed the role of rescue co-ordinator. The ships in the area carried out a meticulous inline search of the area. *Bonaventure's* Principle Medical Officer (PMO) and a medical assistant were flown by "Pedro" to *Celerina* to assess the condition of the survivors. Four persons, including one woman, required hospitalization and they were transported back to *Bonaventure* by "Pedro". Later, "Pedro" collected the three bodies from the *Celerina* prior to her resuming her voyage to Antwerp with the survivors.

On "Bonnie's" arrival, helicopters of HS 50 carried out a search of the area but did not locate any additional survivors or bodies. "Pedro" was employed transferring the nine recovered bodies from the British weather ship to *Bonaventure* and transfer medical supplies to the *Celerina*. The search was discontinued on the 25th as the chance of finding any additional survivors or bodies was very remote, so *Bonaventure* set course for Shannon Estuary, on the west coast of Ireland. Of the 76 persons aboard the Flying Tiger Line transport, 48 survived and 28 perished, 16 bodies were never found.

On arrival at Shannon Estuary, the survivors and 12 bodies were flown to Shannon Airport by HS 50 helicopters and "Pedro". On their return flight, "Pedro" brought the Canadian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, the Honourable George Drew to *Bonaventure*. During divisions (parade) held on *Bonaventure*, the Honourable Mr. Drew thanked the ship's company for their great effort and conveyed a personal telegram of congratulations from the Honourable John Diefenbaker, the Canadian Prime Minister.

The Honourable George Drew was flown ashore by "Pedro" in the afternoon and *Bonaventure* sailed for Portsmouth to fuel before proceeding to her original destination, Rotterdam, Holland, for a formal ship's visit. On 4 October, *Bonaventure* reluctantly departed Rotterdam and the hospitality of the Dutch people and, with HMCS *Nootka* in company as plane guard, sailed for Plymouth and NATO Exercise "SHARP SQUALL VI".

Exercise "SHARP SQUALL VI". *Bonaventure* arrived in Plymouth on 8 October and came to anchor in The Sound, a week after the Exercise started. Between 8 and 13 October, the carrier took part in Exercise "AWKWARD" (an anti-assault swimmer exercise) and "at sea" exercises in the local area. After a brief stay in The Sound, the final stage of Exercise "SHARP SQUALL VI" commenced. During the four days of the final stage of the Exercise in the Atlantic, VS 880 kept four or five CS2F *Trackers* airborne around the clock and HS 50, flying from dawn to dusk kept two helicopters on task. On 18 October, *Bonaventure* arrived in Portsmouth for a programmed visit. During the visit, the Broad pendant of Cmdre R.P. Welland, DSC & Bar, CD, RCN was raised as he took up his appointment as SCOA(A) replacing Cmdre Landymore, who, on the 1st November, was promoted to Rear Admiral (RADM) and appointed Maritime Commander, Pacific.

Cuban Missile Crisis. The Fall of 1962 saw the United States and the Soviet Union come as close as they ever would to global nuclear war. To correct what the Soviet Union considered a strategic missile imbalance with the United States, the Soviet Union began secretly deploying Medium and Intermediate Range Ballistic Missiles (MRBM and IRBM) to Cuba. Once operational, these missiles could have been used against military and civilian targets in most of the continental United States.

On the evening of 22 October, US President John F. Kennedy imposed a sea blockade of Cuba to commence the following day. *Bonaventure*, and her escorts, alongside in Portsmouth, were ordered to return to Halifax, forthwith. The carrier sailed within six hours, minus 20-30 crewmen who were on leave. The ship recovered four CS2F *Trackers* from RNAS *Lee-on-Solent* (HMS *Daedalus*) where they were based for co-pilot training. HMCS *Nootka* was left behind to collect the missing crewmembers. *Bonaventure* arrived in Halifax on 2 November and, after a quick turnaround, took on fuel, stores, and a full war load. With VS 880, HS 50 and "Pedro" embarked, *Bonaventure* sailed to take up her assigned patrol area. The assigned aircraft carriers were stationed about 242 kms (150 miles) apart along the North American coast with *Bonaventure* at the northern end of the line. After ten days of exercising with accompanying destroyers, the Soviet Union agreed to remove the missiles, lessening the crisis. Due to Canadian political "*faux pas*", there was no formal recognition of participation or honours for the RCN or HMCS *Bonaventure* for their valued efforts in this crisis. "Bonnie" returned to Halifax on 18 November where she remained for the rest of the year.

Operations – 1963

The carrier started the year in refit, which lasted three months, and was given a fresh coat of paint. The RCN received their first Sikorsky CH53-2 *Sea King* helicopters. The carrier sustained major damage during a boiler "flash-up" following a Change of Command, delaying her sailing for a NATO exercise. One *Tracker* was lost during ASW operations, another had an engine failure and had to be diverted ashore, and "Pedro" severed its own tail cone.

Three Month Refit. On 5 January, *Bonaventure* sailed for the Saint John Dry Dock and Ship Building Company for a three-month extended refit. She returned to Halifax on 5 April and remained in port taking on stores, fuel and ammunition.

“The Last Punch”. On 10 January, McDonnell F2H-3 *Banshee* 126334 (334), the last of the RCN *Banshees* to fly, was flown to Calgary, Alberta for the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT) to be used as an instructional airframe. In 1978, it was returned to HMCS *Tecumseh*, on temporary loan, from SAIT. In 1988, the aircraft was restored by the Aero Space Museum of Calgary and, along with a Supermarine *Seafire* 15PR, (425/TG-C) and Hawker *Sea Fury*, (WG 565/AA-A/131), was placed on static public display in the museum.

Ship Painting. In May, *Bonaventure* with VS 880 and “Pedro” embarked sailed south to Charleston, South Carolina, to paint ship. On approaching Charleston, the embarked aircraft were flown ashore to Charleston AFB to continue operational training. Freshly painted and looking very smart, “Bonnie” recovered her aircraft and sailed to the Bermuda area to continue work-ups and Carqual training. She returned to Halifax on 4 June.

RCN’s First CHSS-2 *Sea Kings*. As a direct replacement for the ageing Sikorsky HO4S-3 helicopters in the RCN, the first of four Sikorsky-built CHSS-2 *Sea King* helicopters for Canada, aircraft serial number 4001, was officially accepted by VX 10 and taken-on-strength by the RCN on 24 May in a ceremony at Bridgeport, Connecticut. It was flown to the US Naval Test Center (NATC) *Patuxent River* in Maryland on 7 June for pilot training. CHSS *Sea Kings* 4002 and 4003 were formally accepted on 17 June and 2 July, with aircraft 4004 following suit on 19 July. These helicopters were not yet equipped with sonar equipment. *Sea Kings* 4001 and 4002 were later flown to HMCS *Shearwater*, 4003 remained for a time at the NATC and 4004 was loan to Sikorsky for instrument installation trials.

Operational & Tactical Training, Loss of a CS2F *Tracker*. On 10 June, the carrier sailed with VS 880 and HS 50 embarked for Operational & Tactical Training with the British submarine HMSm *Auriga*. On 11 June, while performing Magnetic Anomaly Detection (MAD) trapping with *Auriga*, CS2F *Tracker* 1584 caught a wing tip and cartwheeled into the sea. The co-pilot and junior naval sea crewman survived, the pilot and senior naval air crewman were lost. “Pedro” quickly recovered the two survivors at the scene. A search of the area was carried out but only bits of debris were found. After a memorial service was held on the flight deck for the two lost aircrew, *Bonaventure* continued with the exercise. She returned to Halifax on 23 June where she remained until 25 September.

Change of Command. Captain Robert (Bob) Timbrell, DSC, CD, RCN assumed command of the ship from Captain F.C. Frewer CD, RCN on 7 August.

Boiler Explosion. On 7 October, *Bonaventure* sustained damage during a “flash-up” of the boilers in preparation for sailing for NATO exercises in Europe. Repairs to the boilers and funnel uptakes, at the HMC Dockyard, Halifax delayed sailing for seven weeks.

Arrival of CHSS-2 *Sea King*. On the first day of August, the first two Sikorsky Aircraft Division of United Technologies-built CHSS-2 *Sea King* helicopters for the RCN, serial numbers 4001 & 4002, arrived at HMCS *Shearwater* for service with HS 50.

NATO Exercises in Europe. HMCS *Bonaventure* sailed on 25 September for a week of Carquals with VS 880. She then went on to join ships from Denmark, France, the Netherlands, Norway, United Kingdom and United States for Exercise "SHARP SQUALL". This exercise was divided into two parts – Exercise "ROCKEX", a weapons training section held from 3 to 18 October and, Exercise "FLATEX", a tactical session from 20 to 24 October. These exercises were carried out in the Greenland, Iceland, United Kingdom (GIUK) Gap. Gale force winds and heavy seas forced cancellation of many parts of the exercise. From 24 October to 21 November, *Bonaventure* visited Rosyth, Scotland, Bergen, Norway and Portsmouth, UK for non-operational and R&R visits. *Bonaventure* departed Portsmouth on 21 November, after a two-week stay, and arrived back in Halifax on 30 November.

"Pedro" Accident. On 7 November, "Pedro's" tail cone was severed while shutting down the main rotor blades. This was the first time such an event happened, and was not to be the last.

Tracker 1569 Engine failure. Shortly after launch from *Bonaventure* on 21 November, CS2F-2 *Tracker* 1569 suffered an engine failure and was quickly diverted to RNAS *Culdrose*. The engine and propeller were replaced and, after two days, the repaired *Tracker* was test flown and returned to *Bonaventure*.

Carquals. The carrier sailed 6 December for a week of Carquals with VS 880 off the Nova Scotia coast. This ended the year's activities and the crew joined their families for the festive period.

1964 – Operations.

Between January and the middle of April, *Bonaventure* and her crew spent most of their time on exercises in the Mediterranean. In May, "Bonnie" carried out USN Douglas A-4E *Skyhawk* compatibility trials off the coast of Norfolk, Virginia. From the middle of May until the 7th December, *Bonaventure* spent her time alongside in Halifax and in refit in Saint John, New Brunswick. The final Carqual session with VS 880 was held at the end of the year.

Exercise "GOOEY DUCK" and Mediterranean Cruise. On 13 January, HMCS *Bonaventure* with CANTORTRON FIVE in company sailed south for the Bermuda Op Area and ASW Exercise "GOOEY DUCK" with two RN submarines. While in the Bermuda area, the Minister of National Defence, the Honourable Paul Hellyer and the Chief of Naval Staff, Vice Admiral (VADM) H.S. Rayner, DSC and Bar, CD, RCN, came aboard to observe operations. During his stay, Mr. Hellyer was given a "Jack Stay" transfer to one of the escort ships but was returned to the carrier by helicopter. He was also given a flight in a *Tracker*. VADM Rayner and Mr. Hellyer were flown ashore to Bermuda later in the day. At the conclusion of the exercise the ships sailed for the Mediterranean arriving in Toulon, France, on 6 February, when six *Trackers* were flown to the French Naval Station *Hyerès*, to continue crew training. The carrier departed Toulon on 15 February for Gibraltar and briefings for the upcoming Exercise "MAGIC LANTERN".

Exercise "MAGIC LANTERN". *Bonaventure* departed Gibraltar on 20 February for the first phase of Exercise "MAGIC LANTERN", with NATO ASW forces, off Gibraltar. "Bonnie" returned to Gibraltar for R&R and sports between navies. Then it was back to sea for the second phase of the exercise that was ended early when *Bonaventure* was recalled to Halifax to transport the Canadian Army to Cyprus.

Operation "SNOW GOOSE". *Bonaventure* arrived in Halifax on 13 March and, within five days had embarked army personnel, stores, equipment and the vehicles of the reconnaissance squadron of the Royal Canadian Dragoons and the 1st Battalion of the Royal 22nd Regiment. *Trackers* of VS 880 and "Pedro" were also embarked for the operation. *Bonaventure* sailed on 18 March and arrived in Farmagusta, Cyprus, on 30 March, where she offloaded the troops and their equipment. "Bonnie" sailed on 1 April for Norfolk, Virginia where she arrived alongside on 22 April. On approach to Norfolk, the *Trackers* were flown ashore to Norfolk NAS for the duration of the upcoming USN Douglas A-4E compatibility trials.

A-4E Skyhawk Compatibility Trials. On 1 May, two USN A-4E *Skyhawks*, US Navy BuNos 149648 and 150117, were hoisted aboard *Bonaventure* for compatibility trials. The trials were conducted over a period of four days by the pilots of the USN's VF-43 and NATC units and indicated that it was feasible to operate small attack aircraft from a Light Fleet Carrier (CVL).

Exercise "SILEX". *Bonaventure* sailed for this exercise on 4 May and, when clear of the harbour, recovered her aircraft from Norfolk NAS. The ASW exercise, with US naval forces, was held off the US East Coast with up to 18 submarines participating. Additional *Trackers*, from *Shearwater*, allowed "Bonnie" to keep six aircraft on task around the clock. The exercise concluded on 14 May when *Bonaventure* returned to Halifax.

Tracker Crash. On 8 May, CS2F-2 *Tracker* 1553 went over the side during a night recovery. The *Tracker* had picked up the 'five wire' well to the left of the centerline and went over the port side well forward of the port mirror. The plane guard destroyer rescued the crew of four.

Refit Saint John Dry Dock. *Bonaventure* remained in Halifax until she sailed on 30 July for a three and a half-month refit in Saint John. While the ship was in refit, VS 880 conducted training during July, August and September on the US aircraft carriers USS *Wasp* (CV-18) and USS *Essex* (CVS-9). "Bonnie" returned to Halifax on 13 November, where she took on stores, ammunition and fuel.

CHSS-2 Sea King Arrival. The first of the new Canadian-built and assembled by United Aircraft of Canada Ltd. at Longueuil, Quebec, CHSS-2 *Sea King*, serial number 4005, was taken on strength by the RCN on 14 May. It had had its first flight at the Longueuil facilities on 9 April. The big helicopter arrived at *Shearwater* on 3 September, destined for the ASW role with HS 50.



CHSS-2 Sea King anti-submarine helicopter 4005 is seen posed following its formal rollout and then during its first flight on 9 April piloted by test pilot John MacNeil at Longueuil in April 1964. (CASM via Don MacNeil)

Operations – 1965

Bonaventure sailed in mid-January for the annual “SPRINGBOARD” and “MAPLE SPRING” Exercises with the new CHSS-2 *Sea King* helicopters embarked. The traditional White Ensign was lowered and replaced with the new Canadian Maple Leaf flag. A sad note was the loss of a RCAF CP-107 *Argus* ASW aircraft during an ASW exercise and, an explosion aboard HMCS *Nipigon*. Another Change of Command and the year ended with a European cruise.

Exercise “SPRINGBOARD”. *Bonaventure*, with the new CHSS-2 *Sea Kings* embarked, sailed on 13 January for the annual “Springboard” and “Maple Spring” Exercises, with USN forces, held in the Caribbean and Puerto Rico Op Areas. En route to St. Thomas, in the US Virgin Islands, Carquals for VS 880, HS 50 and the VU 32 Carrier Onboard Delivery (COD) crews were completed. “Bonnie” arrived in St. Thomas, a “free port”, on 22 January, for three days of well earned R&R. On the 25th, it was back to sea and ASW exercises with surface and sub-surface units. *Bonaventure* arrived at Roosevelt Roads NAS on 3 February to disembark the *Tracker* aircraft, stores and support personnel to continue exercising, then sailed to San Juan, Puerto Rico for a ten day self work period.

New Canadian Flag. On 15 February, the White Ensign flag was lowered on all Canadian naval vessels and the new Canadian Maple Leaf flag was raised. As the flags were exchanged on the “Bonnie”, while still in port at San Juan, the *Trackers* and *Sea Kings* flew overhead and the US Naval Base, *San Juan* provided a 21-gun salute.

Trinidad Visit. The carrier sailed south on 18 February, for a five-day visit to Trinidad where she arrived at the United States Naval Station (USNS) *Chagaramus* on the 24th. A highlight of the visit was a party for orphaned children held on the flight deck. *Bonaventure* sailed north, on 1 May for Exercise “MAPLE SPRING” in the Puerto Rico Op Area. After 17 days exercising, “Bonnie” entered San Juan for a five-day visit.

RCAF Canadair CP-107 *Argus* Crash. *Bonaventure* sailed on the morning of 23 March, en route Halifax. Just before midnight on the 23 March, RCAF CP-107 *Argus*, serial number 20727 from 407 Squadron, RCAF Station *Greenwood*, Nova Scotia, crashed 97 kms (60 miles) north of Puerto Rico during a night ASW exercise with the British submarine HMSm *Alcide*. The *Argus* crew of 16 was lost. On 25 March, a memorial service for the crew of the lost *Argus* was held aboard *Bonaventure* and, on completion of the service, a wreath was dropped at the crash site.

Change of Command. On 2 April, Captain Henry (Harry) A. Porter, CD, RCN assumed command of HMCS *Bonaventure* from Captain R.W. Timbrill.

European Cruise. *Bonaventure*, with her new Commanding Officer, departed Halifax on 4 May in company with the destroyers HMCS *Ottawa*, HMCS *Chaudiere* and the Replenishment Ship HMCS *Provider* (AOR 508) of CANTORTRON Seven, en route Portsmouth, UK. Prior to departure, eight *Trackers* were lightered aboard due to projected unfavourable weather, the remaining *Trackers* and the *Sea Kings* were flown aboard once the carrier cleared harbour. “Bonnie” arrived in Portsmouth on 14 May to the usual RN welcome and hospitality. The ship departed Portsmouth, early on the 25th, proceeding via the North Sea carrying out flying operations en route the Baltic Sea and Stockholm, Sweden.

On entering the Baltic she was escorted, throughout, first by an East German patrol boat then a Russian *Riga*-class frigate. After a most enjoyable and busy seven-day informal visit, *Bonaventure* departed Stockholm on 7 June and was again escorted by a *Riga*-class frigate until she entered the North Sea.

Belfast and Londonderry Op Area. “Bonnie” arrived in Belfast on 14 June for a seven-day operational visit. Prior to the forthcoming exercise, ASW courses were carried out ashore. The carrier sailed on 21 June for a two-phase exercise with RN, USN, and RCN surface ships and aircraft. Phase I, consisted of exercises in procedures and communications and ended on 24 June when the ships anchored in Lough Foyle for debriefing in Londonderry. Phase II, an ASW tactical exercise, commenced on the 25th and included simulated attacks by hovercraft. The exercise concluded on 30 June, when *Bonaventure* returned to Belfast for the exercise wash-up, then sailed for Halifax on 2 July, arriving seven days later.

Helicopter Compatibility Trials. On 13 July, two Canadian Army Boeing/Vertol CH-113A *Voyageur* helicopters were flown aboard for compatibility/hangar storage trials. With the rotor blades removed, 18 helicopters could be stored in *Bonaventure*’s two hangars. On 18 July, a Bell UH-1D *Iroquois* helicopter was flown aboard for compatibility trials and, as a possible replacement for “Pedro”. VX 10 submitted a positive report but was not followed up by Headquarters.

Exercise “TOTUM POLE”. This NATO ASW exercise employed aircraft carriers and surface escorts from the RCN, RN and Dutch Navy and maritime aircraft from the RAF. The RN and Dutch carriers operated only between sunrise and sunset whereas *Bonaventure*’s *Trackers* and *Sea Kings* flew around the clock. On 4 October, the ships sailed out into the Atlantic and, at a predetermined date and time, reversed course and commenced a convoy protection exercise into Portsmouth. The exercise terminated on 21 October with a wash-up in Portsmouth.

HMCS *Nipigon* Explosion. On 18 October, HMCS *Nipigon* (DDH 266) experienced an explosion and fire in one of her mess decks. Fortunately, there were no fatalities in the explosion. *Bonaventure* came alongside *Nipigon* and transferred, by “Pedro”, crewmembers who had been burned in the explosion for treatment. The badly burned were transferred to the Royal Naval Burn Unit, near Portsmouth, where three succumbed to their injuries.

Visit Hamburg, Germany and Bermuda. *Bonaventure* departed Portsmouth on 21 November, and entered the Elbe River on 25 November for an eight-day visit to Hamburg. Completing her enjoyable visit, *Bonaventure*’s departure on 2 December was delayed 24 hours by high tides in the river obscuring her mooring lines under 1.8 meters (6 feet) of water. By morning, the waters had receded so “Bonnie” set sail for Bermuda for a three-day unofficial visit. The ship returned to Halifax on 19 December and, remained alongside until 12 January.

Operations – 1966

The year started with a South American cruise and ended with the carrier entering Mid Life Refit.

South American Cruise. *Bonaventure* departed Halifax on 12 January, accompanied by two support ships, six destroyers and a RN submarine under the command of Cmdre J.C. O’Brien, OC, CD, RCN.

This was the largest Canadian task group to ever sail into South American waters. Arriving in Trinidad on 21 January, "Bonnie" secured alongside the deep-water jetty at Chaguaramus where a destroyer, two frigates and a submarine from the West Coast joined her. This was designated Task Group 301.1. After an enjoyable visit, the Task Group sailed for twelve days of ASW exercises with the two submarines before entering the Brazilian port of Rio de Janeiro on 7 February, for a five-day visit.

Crossing the Equator. On 31 January, the Task Group crossed the Equator at Longitude 40 degrees, 30 minutes west and carried out "Crossing the Equator" ceremonies. The tradition is of presenting crewmembers (called "Tadpoles"), who have not crossed the Equator to pay homage to King Neptune and his court. With fun and merriment the "Tadpoles" are initiated and, on completion, are entitled to all of the privileges and responsibilities of a "Shellback".

Montevideo, Uruguay and Bahia, Brazil. The Task Group departed Rio on 12 February, after a very unremarkable visit. Then, "Bonnie" set sail for a four-day transit to Montevideo, Uruguay, while the majority of the escorts headed for Buenos Aires, Argentina. *Bonaventure*, on transit up the Rio De La Plata to Montevideo, sailed past the still visible remains of the German pocket battleship *Graf Spee* that was scuttled in 1940. The Uruguayan Navy was most hospitable and, after a short stay, the Task Group regrouped and set sail for Bahia, the ancient capital of Brazil, for fuel. Again, problems were encountered with the local populace and fuel facilities. HMCS *Provider* was to fuel the Task Group but was diverted to take the Canadian Army to Norway, so the carrier had to fuel from local, less than adequate, resources. The carrier was happy to depart Bahia on 6 March en route San Juan, Puerto Rico where she arrived on 17 March for a four-day call. After a very hospital visit, "Bonnie" departed San Juan on 21 March and arrived back in Halifax on 25 March.

Mid-Life Refit. HMCS *Bonaventure* used the period from 26 March to mid-April to make preparations for her 18-month Mid-Life Refit at the Davie Shipyard, in Lauzon, Quebec, where she arrived on 25 April.

Change of Command. On 1 August, Commander (Cdr.) Alan T. (Smokey) Bice, CD, RCN assumed command of HMCS *Bonaventure* from Captain Porter.

USS Wasp Deck Proficiency. From 10 to 29 September, VS 880 and HS 50 aircraft and crews embarked in USS *Wasp* (CVS-18) for operational work-ups and to maintain deck landing proficiency.

Change of Command. On 20 November, Captain Robert (Bob) H. Falls CD, RCN assumed command of *Bonaventure* from Cdr. Bice.

Operations – 1967

HMCS *Bonaventure* continued to be in Mid-Life Refit until mid-September when she returned to Halifax. She sailed again in mid-October for Carquais, then work-ups in the Bermuda Op Area, where a *Sea King* helicopter was lost.

Mid-Life Refit. “Bonnie” continued refitting at the Davie Shipyards until 13 September, when she sailed for Halifax. Arriving alongside at Halifax on the 15th, she began taking on fuel, stores and ammunition and making preparations for work-ups.

USN Carrier Deck Proficiency. To maintain deck landing proficiency, VS 880 crews operated aboard the USS *Yorktown* (CVS 10) from 23 January to 8 February. Between 25 August and 2 September, VX 10 carried out flight tests with two aircraft aboard the USS *Lexington* (CVS 16).

Carquals and ASW Work-ups. *Bonaventure* sailed on 18 October for Carquals to re-qualify *Tracker* pilots to *Bonaventure*’s smaller flight deck than that found previously on the larger American carriers. HS 50 embarked on 4 November with seven CHSS-2 *Sea King* helicopters then sailed south to the Bermuda Op Area for ASW work-ups.



HMCS Bonaventure and escort HMCS Frasier (DDH 233) sail in the Bermuda Op Area in November. Two CHSS-2 Sea Kings of HS 50 and a few CS2F-3 Trackers of VS 880 are spotted aft on the carrier. Sea King 4025 can be seen deployed and at the ready for operations on Frasier’s small deck. (CF Photo via Robert St-Pierre Collection)

CHSS-2 Sea King Loss. On 1 December, *Sea King* 4002 crashed at sea during a night training exercise. Both of the pilots survived however the two crewmen were lost. The carrier then returned to Halifax on 2 December, and remained alongside for the remainder of the year.

Operations – 1968

In mid-January, *Bonaventure* sailed south to the Caribbean for the annual spring exercises and port visits. A *Sea King* helicopter was lost but the crew and passengers were rescued. A firepower demonstration was provided for the CDS and members of the press. During the latter part of the year, “Bonnie” carried out Carquals and then a “SHOPWINDOW” Exercise for Parliamentarians. The carrier then sailed to Europe for a visit to Belfast, then Exercise “SILVER TOWER” and a visit to Copenhagen, Denmark and Portsmouth before returning to Halifax. On “Pedro” shutdown, a “droop stop” failed to engage allowing the main rotor blade to droop, thereby cutting off its tail cone - again. An operational cruise to Bermuda closed out the year.

Exercise “MAPLE SPRING” (USN Exercise “SPRINGBOARD”) and Unification. On 16 January, HMCS *Bonaventure* slipped and proceeded across Halifax harbour, to Imperial Oil, for fuel and Avgas. VS 880, HS 50 and VU 32’s COD were embarked on the 18th and “Bonnie” sailed south for exercises near Puerto Rico. On 31 January, while in the Bermuda Op Area, the carrier was informed that it would no longer be known as being in the RCN but would become the Sea Element of the Canadian Forces (CF). In addition to *Bonaventure* and the embarked squadrons, nine destroyers, two submarines, two support ships, two auxiliary vessels, VU 32 T-33 *Silver Star* aircraft for target towing and three RCAF Canadair CP-107 *Argus* ASW squadrons took part in Exercise “MAPLE SPRING 1968”.



The flotilla of former RCN ships sailing through the choppy waters and some former RCN Trackers and Sea King helicopters escorting overhead during “MAPLE SPRING 1968”. These had all just become reluctant assets of the same organisation under a new, unpopular all-round single title – the Canadian Forces. (CASM Photo Collection)

San Juan and USCGS *Isla Grande*. “Bonnie” entered San Juan, Puerto Rico on 9 February for R&R. Her aircraft were flown ashore to the USCGS *Isla Grande*, San Juan, to continue operations with the surface ships and submarines.

Loss of CHSS-2 *Sea King* 4027. On 22 February, while on exercise with the submarine HMCS *Onondaga*, *Sea King* 4027 experienced an engine failure and settled into the water. Three attempts to get airborne failed and, when one of the floatation bags failed to inflate, the helicopter rolled over. The two pilots, two naval air crewmen and two observers bailed out and were rescued by HMCS *Onondaga* and returned to the carrier by “Pedro” the rescue helicopter. *Sea King* 4027 was hoisted aboard “Bonnie”, washed with fresh water and flown to Canadian Pratt & Whitney (CP&W), Montreal, by a USAF Douglas C-124 *Globemaster* transport but, due to salt-water corrosion, could not be returned to squadron service. This helicopter was slated to be used as a mock-up for future *Sea King* modifications.

Courtesy Visit to New Orleans. “Bonnie” departed San Juan on 20 February to continue exercises off Puerto Rico. On completion of the exercises, she set sail in company with seven Canadian destroyers for a Government-sponsored seven-day courtesy visit to New Orleans, Louisiana in conjunction with “Canada Week” and the 250th Anniversary of the founding of the city. New Orleans, situated on Lake Pontchartrain, is 85 nautical miles up the Mississippi River from the Gulf of Mexico. Mississippi River pilots are required for the long river passage where ships draught, water depth and river bends dictate passing side rather than Rules of the Road. After seven days of formal receptions, open ships’ visits, and parties for many orphaned children, HMCS *Bonaventure* and her accompanying destroyers departed New Orleans on 7 March and returned to conduct additional Carquals and Exercises off Puerto Rico.



On the muddy “Mighty” Mississippi, HMCS Bonaventure, with some of her complement of CS2F-3 Trackers, the HO4S-3 “Pedro” plane guard helicopter spotted on deck, forward of the island, and crew arranged around the deck, arrives for a short visit to New Orleans, Louisiana, in March 1968. (CF Photo via Robert St-Pierre Collection)

Firepower Demonstration. One day was set aside for a firepower demonstration for the Chief of Defence Staff, General J.V. Allard, CC, CBE, DSO and 2 Bars, CD, CF, along with forty members of the Canadian press corps. Visits were also made to ships in company. On completion, *Bonaventure* paid a three day R&R visit to San Juan before returning to Halifax on 17 March.

Carquals, Exercise “RACER RUN” and US Port Visits. *Bonaventure* sailed on 6 May for Carquals with VS 880, VU 32 and VX 10 which carried on and off until 30 May. In company with HMC Ships, *Saguenay*, *Kootenay* and *Nipigon*, “Bonnie” set sail for a six-day visit to New York City. On 9 June, “Bonnie” was back at sea again operating with USN Task Group 22 providing air cover for the amphibious Exercise “RACER RUN”. On completion, the carrier set sail for Fort Lauderdale, Florida for a five day R&R visit. *Bonaventure* departed Fort Lauderdale on 29 June, and was joined again by HMC Ships *Saguenay*, *Kootenay* and *Nipigon* for ASW exercises en route Halifax. “Bonnie” arrived alongside the Shearwater jetty on 3 July, where she remained for most of the month then moved to the Halifax Dockyard for a self work and summer leave period.

Carquals, Exercises “SHOPWINDOW and “SILVERTOWER”, and a European Cruise. *Bonaventure* sailed on 24 August for a short Carqual period and Exercise “SHOPWINDOW”, on 28 August, for Parliamentarians and VIPs. Exercise “SHOPWINDOW” was a display of all aspects of naval activity: gunfire, depth charge launches, escort, submarine and air displays. “Bonnie” returned the visitors ashore and remained alongside until 3 September when she departed for Belfast, Northern Ireland, arriving on the 12th for a very friendly four-day visit. HMCS *Bonaventure*, with her three accompanying destroyers, departed Belfast on 16 September en route the Norwegian Sea and NATO Exercise “SILVERTOWER” from the 16th to the 28th. The following morning, a Soviet *Kotlin*-class destroyer joined the exercise and, together with Tupolev Tu-95 *Bear* D maritime reconnaissance aircraft and Intelligence Collector (AGI) trawlers, shadowed the fleet paying special attention to the aircraft carriers. Time was taken to pay homage to “Neptunus Rex” when “Bonnie” crossed the Arctic Circle. The exercise terminated on 28 September when the carrier came to anchor in the Firth of Forth, Scotland.

On completion of the exercise “wash-up”, *Bonaventure*, with three destroyers in company, departed the Firth of Forth for the three day crossing of the North Sea, arriving in Copenhagen, Denmark, on 4 October, for a six day visit. “Bonnie” and the three destroyers reluctantly departed Copenhagen on 10 October, crossing the North Sea through the Strait of Dover and the English Channel for a eight day visit to Portsmouth. On 12 October, four CS2F *Trackers* were launched to RNAS *Lee-on-Solent* to provide crew training while “Bonnie” was in Portsmouth. The carrier departed Portsmouth on 22 October, recovered her *Trackers* from RNAS *Lee-on-Solent* and set sail for Halifax, arriving there on 30 October.

“Pedro” Accident. On 27 October, during shutdown after the recovery of all *Tracker* aircraft aboard ship, a “droop stop” failed to engage on “Pedro”, HO4S-3 serial number 55305, allowing the main rotor blade to droop, cutting off the helicopter’s tail cone.

Bermuda Op Area. To end the year, HMCS *Bonaventure*, with VS 880 and HS 50 embarked, sailed south on 2 December for two weeks of ASW exercises in the Bermuda Op Area. “Bonnie” returned to Halifax on 15 December for the holiday season and remained alongside until mid-January 1969.

Operations – 1969

The year started out as normal with *Bonaventure* sailing south for Exercise “MAPLE SPRING”. On completion, “Bonnie” returned to Halifax for a Change of Command and a four as well as a half-month self-refit. The latter part of the year was taken up with work-ups, Carquals, an Exercise “SHOPWINDOW”, a visit to Trinidad, loss of a *Tracker* and a European cruise. The Government’s sudden and unpopular announcement that HMCS *Bonaventure* would be scrapped, sold or mothballed hit all personnel hard. The CS2F *Trackers* of VS 880 would soon be operated from shore bases. A gearbox explosion aboard HMCS *Kootnay* killed nine and injured forty and a loss of four sailors during Avgas tank cleaning.

Exercise “MAPLE SPRING”. *Bonaventure* in company with eight destroyers and two support ships departed Halifax on 14 January for Exercise “MAPLE SPRING” in the Puerto Rico Op Area. On 28 January, “Bonnie” entered San Juan for exercise briefing, sailing again on 30 January for the exercises. Exercises continued until 9 February when *Bonaventure* again entered San Juan, for five days of R&R.



HMCS Bonaventure takes on fuel from the Canadian Replenishment Ship HMCS Provider (AOR 508) during the "MAPLE SPRING 69 exercise. CS2F-3 Tracker 1587 of VS 880 is seen spotted forward on the deck. (DND Photo)

Loss of Trackers 1592 and 1572. Back at sea again, during a catapult launch on 16 February, the launch bridle on *Tracker* 1592 broke before the aircraft could attain flying speed. The *Tracker* went over the bow and crashed into the sea where the carrier subsequently struck it. The crew survived and was rescued by "Pedro", the plane guard helicopter, although the pilot had his leg severed when he went through the ship's propeller. The injured pilot was flown, by helicopter, to the American Army Hospital in San Juan, Puerto Rico. On 16 March, during a night wave-off/bolter in rough seas, *Tracker* 1572, which had lined up on the axial deck, touched a parked *Tracker*, shearing off about 1.2 meters (4 feet) of 1572's starboard wing. When contacted by Flying Control the pilot reported that he was having difficulty controlling the aircraft at slow speeds and, was rapidly losing fuel from the severed wing and was electing to ditch alongside the carrier. The ditching was successful and the plane guard destroyer rescued the crew.

Change of Command. On 31 March Captain James M. Cutts, CD, RCN assumed command of *Bonaventure* from Captain Robert H. Falls.

The carrier then sailed south for a five-day friendly visit to Willenstad, in the Netherlands Antilles. In 1960/1961, Canada transferred 17 CS2F-1 *Tracker* aircraft to the Royal Netherlands Navy (RNN) under Mutual Aid arrangements. Ten *Trackers* were flown from *Shearwater* to Curacao, Netherlands Antilles via *Quonset Point* NAS, *Norfolk* NAS, *Homestead* AFB, Florida, then island hopping to Nassau, the Bahamas Islands, Port aux Prince, and Haiti to Curacao. Seven were embarked in the RNN aircraft carrier HNLMS *Karel Doorman* during her visit to Halifax in September 1961. On leaving Willemstad on 25 February, *Bonaventure* provided Carrier Controlled Approach (CCA) training for the RNN's ex-Canadian CS2F-1 *Trackers* based in Curacao. "Bonnie" returned to the Puerto Rico Op Area for additional "MAPLE SPRING" exercises. Sailing on the 13th, *Bonaventure* conducted an Exercise "SHOPWINDOW" for a CBC television crew. Then it was off for an official visit to Port of Spain, Trinidad. Governor General and Mrs. Michener were on a state visit to Trinidad and Tobago and hosted a reception and dinner for local dignitaries aboard "Bonnie". On 24 March, *Bonaventure* departed Port of Spain, and headed north for Halifax where she arrived on 31 March.

Exercises “SHOPWINDOW” and “PEACE KEEPER”. *Bonaventure* remained alongside in HMC Dockyard, Halifax from 31 March to 13 August, for a self-refit and to paint ship. On 13 August, “Bonnie” was back to sea again for a week of trials and work-ups followed by a day back in port, then six days of Carquals with VS 880, returning to Halifax on 27 August. She sailed again on 8 September with VS 880, HS 50, VU 32’s COD and HU 21’s “Pedro” embarked. HMCS *Provider* and the Fifth and Seventh Escort Squadrons were in company for Exercise “SHOPWINDOW”, conducted on 9 September for the Parliamentary Defence sub-committee. It was then off to European waters for NATO Exercise “PEACE KEEPER” and, what was to be *Bonaventure*’s final cruise with embarked aircraft. The Canadian task group joined the NATO exercise off the coast of Ireland in adverse weather conditions. On 19 September, the Minister of National Defence, the Honourable Leo Cadieux, announced that HMCS *Bonaventure* would be scrapped, sold or mothballed and that her aircraft would be operated from shore bases on coastal surveillance until disposed of in 1973. On 23 October, while landing aboard, the left wheel of VS 880 *Tracker* 1563 went over the flight deck edge leaving the *Tracker* hanging over the side. The aircrew evacuated the aircraft safely and without injury.

Visits to Rotterdam and Oslo. *Bonaventure* then paid a visit to Rotterdam, Netherlands from 25th to 29th September, followed by a seven-day visit to Oslo, Norway from the 1st to 7th October. On departing Oslo, *Bonaventure* rendezvoused with HMCS *Provider* and units of the First, Fifth and Seventh Canadian Escort Squadrons who were visiting other foreign ports. Exercises were carried out with a submarine and Fast Patrol Boats from the Norwegian Navy. Fleet Air Arm Blackburn/Hawker Siddeley *Buccaneer* S.2 strike aircraft, from HMS *Hermes* (R12), operating north of *Bonaventure*, carried out simulated attacks on the Canadian Task Group. Also, a flight of Canadair-built CF-104 *Starfighters* from Zweibrucken, West Germany “beat-up” *Bonaventure*.



Four fast RCAF Starfighters perform a proper “beat-up” of the RCN’s HMCS Bonaventure. (Bill Upton Collection)

Daily, not-so-covert overflights by Soviet Tupolev Tu-95 *Bear* D maritime reconnaissance aircraft were an annoyance. En route Portsmouth, Soviet cruisers and surfaced submarines, probably on their way to the Mediterranean, were encountered and, at times, a Soviet cruiser interfered with *Bonaventure's* flight operations until sternly warned off by the carrier. The Task Group entered Portsmouth on 12 October for a ten-day visit.

HMCS *Kootenay* Gearbox Explosion and *Tracker* Crash. The *Bonaventure* Task Group departed Portsmouth on 22 October en route Halifax. On the evening of the 23rd, HMCS *Kootenay*, having been detached for full power trials, suffered a main gearbox explosion. Nine members of the crew were killed and forty injured. The seriously injured were flown by *Sea Kings* to RNAS *Culdrose* for transfer to the Royal Naval Burn Unit, near Portsmouth. The *Kootenay* was sent back to the UK under tow. On the same evening, the carrier suffered her last aircraft accident when *Tracker* 1565 had a hard landing, which caused the port landing gear to collapse and punch through the wing. The aircraft dropped onto its port wing allowing the propeller blades to contact the flight deck stopping the engine in a shower of sparks. Aviation fuel was spilled but there was no fire. *Bonaventure* resumed her course for home, arriving in Halifax on 30 October.

Empty Avgas Tanks, Loss of Four Sailors & Visit to Boston. *Bonaventure* sailed early in December and, once clear of coastal waters, pumped and vented the Avgas tanks. However, one tank still contained some Avgas and, when entered by two sailors sent to clean the tank they were overcome by the fumes. The fumes also overcame two sailors sent to the rescue. The four bodies were recovered later in the day by a naval aviator using his scuba gear. "Bonnie" then proceeded to Boston for a short visit and, with the help from the USN, had the Avgas tank emptied and then sealed with salt water.

The Last Hurrah. On HMCS *Bonaventure's* return from Boston, as many pilots as possible were given their final carrier landing experience. More than a dozen CS2F *Trackers* from VS 880 and VU 32 were in the circuit doing "touch-and-go" landings prior to entering the Halifax Harbour.



Approaching Halifax, CS2F Trackers, Sea Kings and HO4S "Pedro" on deck coming home. (DND Photo)

Four *Trackers*, two *Sea Kings* and the HO4S-3 "Pedro" from HU 21 were kept aboard for a final salute to VADM J.C. O'Brien CD, RCN as the carrier passed Maritime Command Headquarters. It was programmed that the *Trackers* would be catapulted off in the harbour near George's Island. However, the catapult went unserviceable leaving only two alternatives, a free deck launch or unceremoniously crane off the *Trackers*. Captain Jim Cutts proposed launching the *Trackers* in Bedford Basin. Accordingly, putting on all the knots he could to obtain the necessary wind across the deck to launch the aircraft, while circling within the confines of Bedford Basin. One aircraft was launched each time the carrier settled, for a short time, on a predetermined launch course. The four launched aircraft together with 16 other *Trackers* paid tribute to HMCS *Bonaventure* in a flypast as she was nudged, by tugs, into her berth at Dockyard Jetty 4, on 12 December.



Devoid of all of her aircraft and with only the ship's crew lined up on the deck, HMCS Bonaventure is seen here being manoeuvred by tugboats to dock at Jetty 4 in Halifax Harbour on 12 December. (DND Photo HS69-3061)

So ended Canada's 23 years of dedication and professionalism with carrier aviation. Special tribute must be paid to all those who sailed in the aircraft carriers *Warrior*, *Magnificent* and *Bonaventure*, and especially to all those men who kept the aircraft flying.

Operations – 1970

Final Change of Command, Exercises "NIMROD CAPERS" and "ARCTIC EXPRESS" with the Army and, the annual "MAPLE SPRING" Exercise. HMCS *Bonaventure* was Decommissioned / Paid-off and sold for scrap. This was the end of an era of Naval Aviation.

Change of Command. On 1 January, Commander Henry W. Vondette, CD, RCN, assumed command of *Bonaventure* from Captain Cutts.

Exercises “NIMROD CAPER” & “MAPLE SPRING 70”. “Bonnie” was due to Pay Off in January. However, due to the unavailability of the Operational Support Ship HMCS *Protecteur* to support Exercise “MAPLE SPRING”, HMCS *Bonaventure* was required to act not as an aircraft carrier but as a supply/support/troop ship. Six CHSS-2 *Sea Kings* were embarked to support and provide maintenance service for the helicopter equipped destroyers (DDH). One HO4S-3 from HU 21 was also embarked for utility operations.

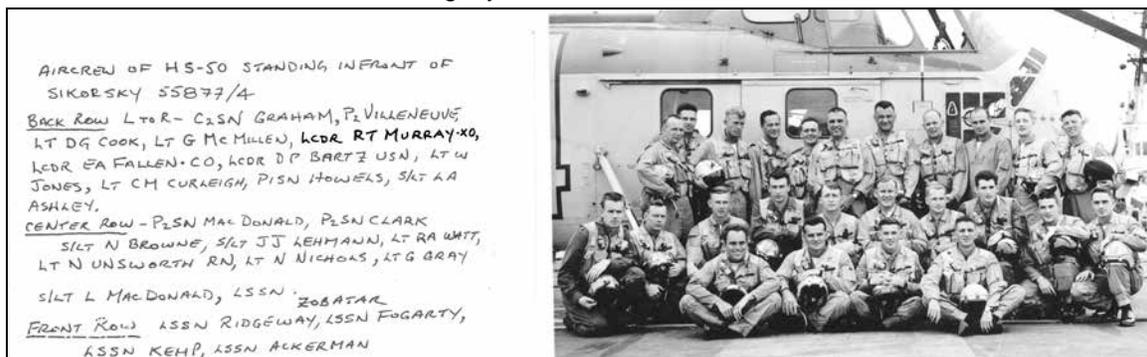
Bonaventure sailed in January for Kingston, Jamaica with 200 members of the Canadian Army's Royal 22nd Regiment (the “Van Doos”) embarked together with their mobile equipment for Exercise “NIMROD CAPER”. When not assisting the Army, “Bonnie” provided the Canadian ships participating in Exercise “MAPLE SPRING 70” with fuel, supplies and helicopter support. The carrier returned to Halifax on 18 March.

Exercise “ARCTIC EXPRESS”. *Bonaventure* sailed again on 25 March for Narvik, Norway to transport Land Element equipment used during Exercise “ARCTIC EXPRESS”. “Bonnie” returned to Halifax on 25 April for the last time as an operational aircraft carrier.

***Bonaventure* Decommission / Paying Off.** When the off-loading of the Canadian Army personnel and equipment was completed, the ship's company commenced de-storing and removing “Want List” equipment from the ship.

On 3 July, VADM J.C. O'Brien CD, CF, Commander Maritime Command, and *Bonaventure*'s Commanding Officer, Commander H.C. Vondette, CD, CF, and the ship's company together with a multitude of former officers and crew of Canada's aircraft carriers, and CFB *Stadacona*'s band, gathered on the flight deck to bid farewell to Naval Aviation. After Paying-Off, a reduced ship's company completed the task of clearing out the ship and preparing her for disposal.

Bonaventure was sold to William Kennedy of Vancouver, British Columbia for \$851,700 CDN who, in turn, sold her to Mitsui of Japan for \$1.6 million. The Mitsui Company then entered into a joint partnership with the Tung-Chen Iron and Steelworks, in Kaohsiung, Taiwan to dismantle the well-served carrier *Bonaventure* for scrap. Then *Bonaventure* was stripped of usable military equipment and made ready for the long tow by tug to Taiwan. The Japanese ocean going tug, FUJI MARU, arrived in Halifax and, on 28 October 1970 commenced the slow, five month tow to Taiwan via The Cape of Good Hope, Indian Ocean, Strait of Malacca, South China Sea to Kaohsiung, Taiwan, arriving there in mid-March 1971. Thus, so finally ended Canada's esteemed aircraft carrier-borne naval aviation legacy.



This compilation was produced principally with information and events recorded in the official Logbooks and the personal experiences and recollections of LCDR Robert T. Murray during his dedicated RCN service in HMCS *Bonaventure*. (via CASM)

Appendix 1.0

Aircraft Accidents 1957

14 May, VF 871 F2H-3 *Banshee* 126301 (701) crashed at Prospect, Nova Scotia. Pilot was killed.

31 May, VF 870 F2H-3 *Banshee* 126313 (104) in-flight wing separation. Aircraft crashed on McNabs Island. Pilot killed.

27 August, VF 870 F2H-3 *Banshee* 126306 (103) and VC 921 *Avenger* AS 3 Mk. 1 53358 (341) collided on runway. Both pilots killed.

2 October, VF 870 F2H-3 *Banshee* 126403 (141) lost at sea. Pilot killed.

27 October, with foul weather conditions, long swells and a pitching deck, resulted in the loss of VS 880 CS2F *Tracker* 1508 that went over the side. Fortunately the crew was rescued.

Aircraft Accidents 1958

25 February, VF 871 F2H-3 *Banshee* 126428 (108) lost at sea off Mayport, Florida. Pilot killed.

4 March, VF 871 F2H-3 *Banshee* 126303 (142) suffered a brake failure and went over the port side of *Bonaventure*. The pilot ejected, however, his parachute deployed in the water making helicopter rescue dangerous. Pilot was rescued by the plane guard destroyer, but later succumbed to his injuries.

Aircraft Accidents 1959

14 January, VF 870 F2H-3 *Banshee* 126488 (105) crashed at USNAS *Key West*, Florida due to undercarriage problems and an engine flame-out. Pilot uninjured.

2 April, VS 880 CS2F *Tracker* 1527 crashed during a night recovery in adverse weather conditions. Crew of four was lost.

11 November, VF 870 F2H-3 *Banshee* 126400 (110) cold catapult shot. Aircraft went into the sea. Pilot rescued.

13 December, VS 880 CS2F *Tracker* 1529 crashed after catapult shot. Crew of four was lost.

Aircraft Accidents 1960

14 April, VU 32 CS2F *Tracker* 1510 carried out a night ditching about 241 kms (150 miles) WSW of Bermuda after becoming lost while en route to Bermuda. Crew of five was rescued by US Coast Guard cutter *Yacutat* and taken to Bermuda.

15 August, VS 880 CS2F *Tracker* 1586 crashed while exercising with a submarine. Pilot and Junior Crewman were lost. Co-pilot and Senior Crewman were rescued.

Aircraft Accidents 1960 (cont'd)

8 December, VF 870 F2H-3 *Banshee* 126469 (469) hit a Mallard duck that shattered the canopy. The aircraft was escorted to a safe landing at the Saint John Airport.

Aircraft Accidents 1961

16 June, VF 870 F2H-3 *Banshee* 126434 (434) crashed near Peggy's Cove, Nova Scotia. Pilot killed.

10 July, HS 50 HO4S-3 55320/254/4 ditched off the South Carolina coast. The crew of three was rescued by the USS *Van Vooris* (DE 1028)

11 August, HS 50 HO4S-3 55886/255/5 crashed 4.8 kms (3 miles) south of Aspen Cove, NFLD while fighting forest fires. Crew and passengers survived.

Aircraft Accidents 1962

5 February, VS 880 CS2F *Tracker* 1587 sustained moderate damage to the starboard wing and engine from a heavy landing.

Aircraft Accidents 1963

11 June, VS 880 CS2F *Tracker* 1584 crashed during MAD trapping exercise with HMS *Auriga*. The Co-pilot and Junior Observer's Mate were rescued by helicopter. The Pilot and Senior Observer's Mate were lost.

7 November, HU 21 Det. 1 "Pedro", HO4S-3 55877 tail cone was severed while shutting down the main rotor blades.

21 November, VS 880 CS2F *Tracker* 1569 suffered an engine failure shortly after launch and was diverted to RNAS *Culdrose* where the engine and propeller were changed. After a two-day delay, the *Tracker* was test flown and returned to the *Bonaventure*.

Aircraft Accidents 1964

8 April, VS 880 *Tracker* 1553 during a night landing, the aircraft picked-up the five-wire well left of centerline and went over the port side of the ship. The crew of four rescued by the plane guard destroyer.

Aircraft Accidents 1965 and 1966

No accidents.

Aircraft Accidents 1967

1 December, HS 50 CHSS-2 *Sea King* 4002 crashed at sea during night training exercise. Both pilots survived, however the two Sonar Operators were lost.

Aircraft Accidents 1968

22 February, HS 50 CHSS-2 *Sea King* 4027 suffered engine failure, settled into the water and rolled over. The two pilots, two crewman and two passengers were rescued by the submarine HMCS *Onondaga*. The helicopter was recovered by *Bonaventure*, but was eventually written-off.

27 October, HU 21 Det. 1, "Pedro", HO4S 55305, on shutdown a droop stop failed to engage allowing the main rotor blade to droop, cutting off the helicopter's tail cone.

Aircraft Accidents 1969

16 February, the catapult launch bridle broke on VS 880 CS2F *Tracker* 1592, and the aircraft ditched in the sea. The crew was rescued by "Pedro". The *Tracker's* pilot was washed through the carrier's propeller and was severely injured.

16 March, during a night landing and overshoot, the starboard wing of VS 880 CS2F *Tracker* 1572 struck a parked aircraft losing a good portion of the outer wing. Control of the *Tracker* at slow speed was sluggish. Pilot elected to ditch alongside the carrier and was rescued by the plane guard destroyer.