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Battle Honours Won HMS Nabob, 1944

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Abstract: The Royal Canadian Navy provided much of the crew for the British escort carrier HMS *Nabob*, both to relieve a manpower shortage in the Royal Navy and to give Canadian personnel experience in operating aircraft carriers. *Nabob*'s Canadian crew achieved these goals. They operated the ship in two major British fleet actions, and through outstanding damage control saved the ship after she was severely damaged by a U-boat attack.

The genesis of Canadian naval aviation can be traced to the difficulties the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) encountered in its battle for the convoys during 1942. The shortcomings of the service's modest, hastily constructed and ill-equipped escorts sharpened the naval staff's determination to develop a fleet of substantial warships, in which aircraft carriers would be an essential element. The birth of the RCN's air arm came about as a result of the efforts of a handful of Canadian officers who recognized the value of naval air power to the prosecution of the war.[1]

During the Second World War anti-submarine operations became a top Allied priority demanding massive resources that had been entirely unanticipated prior to 1940. In less than three years the RCN, which had only 3,500 personnel and six ocean-going warships in September 1939, mushroomed in size to fill this gap in British and American preparations and became a major ocean-going fleet. However, most of the Navy's more than two hundred ocean-going anti-submarine escorts were emergency-built, single-purpose types, whose designs incorporated many compromises for quick construction; they were, in fact, intended for early disposal from military service as soon as the war was over. This was no way to build a service that would endure in the post-war period. The Navy wanted bigger and more diverse ships that together would make a "balanced" fleet capable of carrying out a wide range of operations, either independently or as a significant component of an allied combination. It was for this reason that during the war the RCN, even while rushing large numbers of anti-submarine escorts into service, also exerted generally effective pressure on the government to acquire larger, more sophisticated warships such as Tribal-class destroyers, cruisers, and aircraft carriers.[2]

The importance of naval air power was driven home by the success of the Royal and US Navy's specialized anti-submarine escort aircraft carriers against German U-boats in 1943 soon after the poor showing of Canadian escort groups resulted in their withdrawal from the transatlantic run in early months of that year for upgrades in equipment and training. In fact, the British surface groups that replaced them had equal difficulty against the massed U-boat "packs" in the central ocean, underscoring the need for escort carrier support, especially in the "air gap" south of Greenland that was beyond the range of most land-based maritime patrol aircraft.

The origin of the escort carrier was a response to the initial deployment of U-boats in large groups or "packs," and the use by the Germans of long-range air reconnaissance, in late 1940 and 1941 in order to catch convoys far out at sea, beyond the reach of the bulk of the surface and air escort forces then available. By December 1941, the Royal Navy (RN) had a modest force of four armoured and four unarmoured aircraft carriers, and only one more of each was expected to be completed by 1946. This was something like the bare minimum or less needed for operations by the main fleet. In order to provide air support for trade convoys, and also for amphibious operations to land army forces – another new requirement that could not have been foreseen prior to the defeat of France in 1940 and Britain's ejection from continental Europe – it was estimated that the RN needed

HMS *Nabob* – a Royal Navy escort carrier crewed largely by Canadian personnel.

Canadian War Museum (CWM) 19900321-016

34 additional carriers as soon as possible. To make up the shortfall in numbers it was necessary to convert large merchant ships, built or building, by installing a flying deck on top of the hull. In the event, the shipbuilding program undertaken by the US to supply merchant ships to Britain under "Lend-Lease" proved to be the major source of hulls for the RN's escort carriers.[3]

The RCN took the first tentative steps toward the establishment of its own naval air branch in early 1943, when Rear-Admiral G.C. Jones, vice-chief of the naval staff, advised the chief of the naval staff (CNS), Vice-Admiral P.W. Nelles, that both the director of operations division, Captain H.N. Lay, and the director of plans division, Captain H.G. DeWolf, "should examine and report on what practical steps the Royal Canadian Navy can take in this matter."[4] Further impetus came from the allied Atlantic Convoy Conference held in Washington in March 1943 to find means of countering the success of the mid-ocean U-boat operations. The conference underscored the importance of air support to surface escorts, and recognized Canada as a full partner in the Atlantic battle.

Equally important in progress of Canadian plans for naval aviation was Britain's manpower crisis, which paved the way for the RCN to crew British escort carriers. Soon after the Atlantic Convoy Conference, and sooner than anyone had expected, the worst crisis in the Atlantic passed. On 30 October 1943, the Admiralty announced its intention to cut down its escort building program. Soon after, Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham, first sea lord, appealed to the Canadian chief of the naval staff for additional assistance with manning beyond what had been already agreed at the first Quebec Conference in August 1943 (the latter was a summit between President Franklin Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill, during which the Canadian services took the opportunity to liaise with senior British and American staffs). Before responding to the Admiralty's request, Naval Service Headquarters (NSHQ) sent Captain W.B. Creery, assistant chief of the naval staff (ACNS), to London to discuss the matter with Admiralty officials. With the information Creery obtained, the staff in Ottawa agreed that Canada would follow Britain's lead and reduce both the frigate and corvette construction programs in order to release personnel for manning additional RN warships. The specific proposals called for the RCN to take over ten frigates and two escort carriers.[5]

HMS *Nabob*[6] (CVE 41 – the former USS *Edisto Bay*), the first carrier slated for crewing by the RCN, was commissioned into the Royal Navy on 7 September 1943, as she lay alongside the fitting-out wharf of the Seattle-Tacoma Shipbuilding Company at Seattle, Washington. Having completed with stores, and manned by a skeleton Royal Navy crew, *Nabob* steamed to Vancouver, British Columbia, for modification to Royal Navy standards. On 15 October 1943, Captain H.N. Lay, RCN, took command and Canadian personnel began to join the ship.

The work carried out at Vancouver on *Nabob* and other American-built escort carriers delivered to the RN was the result of contention between

the two senior allied navies. On 27 March 1943 the escort carrier HMS *Dasher* sank with heavy loss of life as the result of an explosion below decks as 891 Squadron's Fairey Swordfish aircraft were being refuelled. The Admiralty board of enquiry attributed the explosion to a leaking valve, badly sited below a mess deck in the petrol control department, which was touched off by a carelessly dropped cigarette. The RN blamed American safety arrangements which were, they said, "by our standards practically non-existent." American experts blamed British inexperience with the fuel safety arrangement, in which carbon-dioxide was pumped through the system to purge it. Regardless, "the obvious presence of persistent and widespread petrol vapour below decks was a feature of these early ships and was well-known to those on board who took it for granted that a torpedo hit would explode the petrol and blow their 'floating petrol can' apart instantly. The volatile high octane was carried in compartments not designed for it..."[7] Consequently, the Admiralty decided that fuel storage would be reduced to about a quarter (22,500 gallons) of that originally provided and that the standard fleet-carrier system of separate cylindrical gasoline tanks would be fitted into its escort carriers.[8]

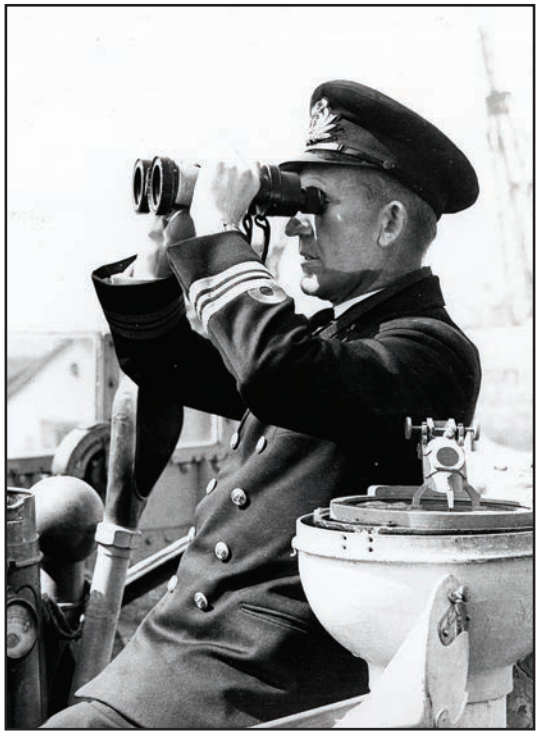
Other modifications included adding another 1,200 to 2,000 tons of ballast to increase stability. The Admiralty did not countenance the American method of achieving stability by pumping salt water into empty fuel tanks. In addition to the extra ballast added to each escort carrier, buoyancy drums were fitted over the ballast in the wing deep tanks to reduce the list after a torpedo hit; the Admiralty also originated the system of bomb-magazine wing bulkheads, keeping weapons more than ten to 15 feet from the ship's side.[9] Both of these latter modifications would play an important role in saving HMS *Nabob* as we shall see later.

Finally, American-built escort carriers had their flight decks lengthened by 42 feet to operate British aircraft "which could not use the American catapults and perhaps, like the Swordfish, needed a longer take-off run when fully loaded than the original deck provided."[10]

The RCN was particularly anxious to man the two British escort carriers as quickly as possible. In an effort to reduce the delays in the conversion program the Canadian government offered "to do the anglicizing modifications at their own expense," and placed the work with the shipbuilding firm of Burrard Drydock and Shipbuilding Company in Vancouver. The alterations carried out by Burrards did not include the modifications to enable the ship also to serve as an assault carrier in support of landing operations. The extensive work involved in this further conversion, which included the installation of an operational telephone system, a new briefing room, an army plot, extra cabins and bunks, was done the following spring, in April 1944, in the United Kingdom by the Caledon Shipbuilding Company at Dundee.[11]

By 28 December 1943, the Canadian portion of HMS *Nabob*'s complement had all joined the carrier.[12] Early in January of 1944, *Nabob* embarked fuel, ammunition and stores in preparation for her working up trials scheduled for 12 January. The trials proceed smoothly until 25 January when the carrier ran aground near the mouth of the Fraser River, in the Strait of Georgia, while steaming at full speed into the wind as she prepared to land on the first of the Grumman Avenger torpedo bombers of the Royal Navy's 805 Squadron. The aircraft was hurriedly waved off, and frantic efforts were made to refloat the ship by going full astern for a period of five to ten minutes, but to no avail.[13] A number of vessels were soon on the scene to render assistance, including another escort carrier, HMS *Ranee*, and HMC Ships *Armentieres* and *Haro*. The first attempt to pull *Nabob* off the sandbank was made at high water on the morning of 26 January, with *Ranee* secured astern, *Armentieres* on the starboard quarter, and *Haro* on the port. The operation failed. A second attempt was made later that day after the carrier had been lightened by pumping out some 300 tons of oil fuel and 700 tons of salt water from the fuel tanks. It too failed.[14]

After two days, *Nabob* had been lightened by some 3,202 tons; dredging operations had been completed and with the assistance of two tugs she was finally refloated. Once clear of the sandbank the carrier shaped a course under her own power for Burrard Drydock located in



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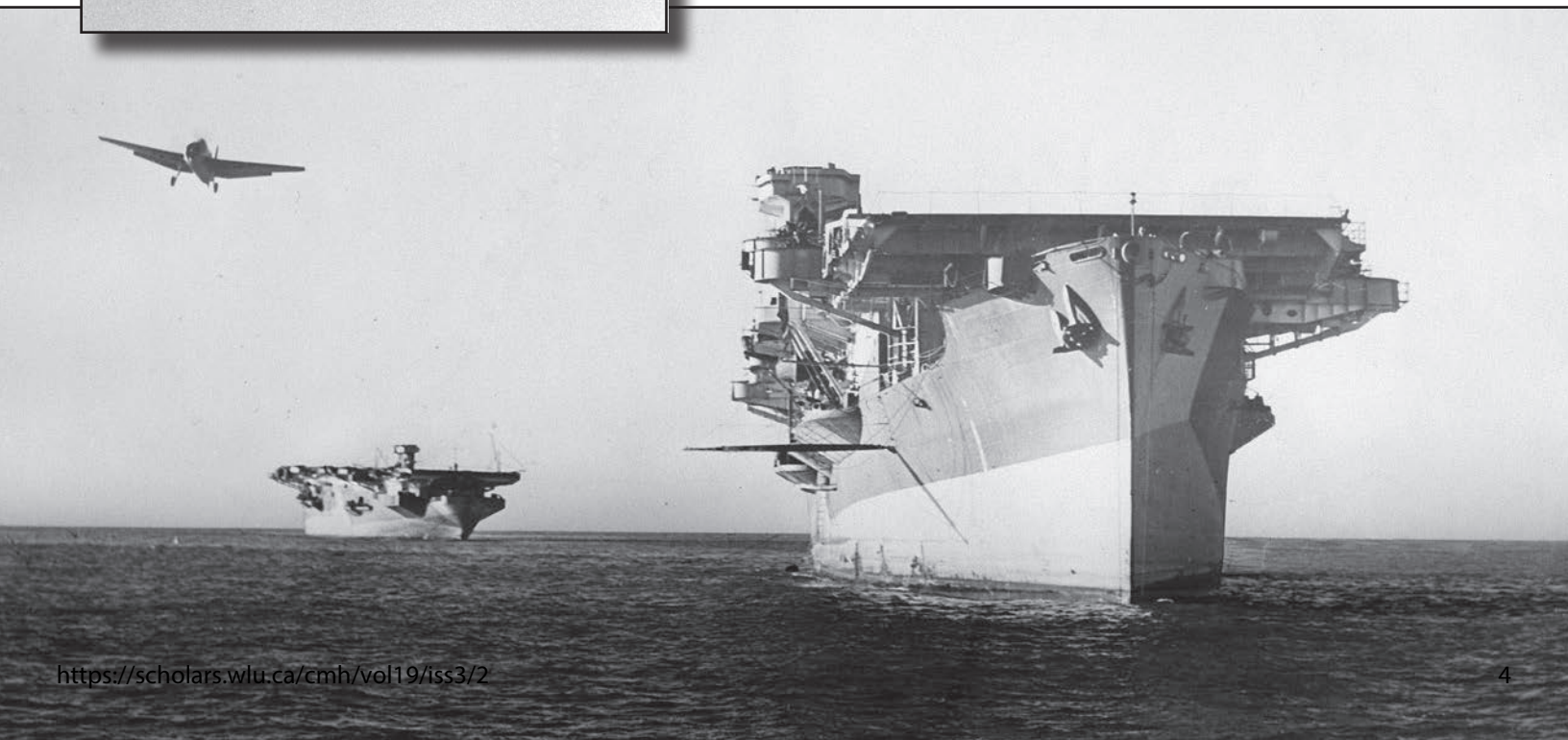
As the director of the Royal Canadian Navy's operations division Captain Horatio Nelson Lay, RCN, helped to shape the RCN's establishment of a naval air branch and would later command HMS *Nabob*.

LAC PA 189572

Above: HMS *Nabob* photographed on the morning of 25 January 1944 making good speed through the Strait of Georgia.

Below: Later that day *Nabob* ran hard aground on Roberts Bank at the mouth of the Fraser River south of Vancouver, British Columbia. The carrier had been steaming at full speed into the wind as it prepared to take on board the Grumman Avengers of 805 Squadron. In the background can be seen another escort carrier, HMS *Ranee*, which was sent to help. *Nabob* was finally refloated after two days of effort.

Left: A Grumman Avenger torpedo bomber from HMS *Nabob*.

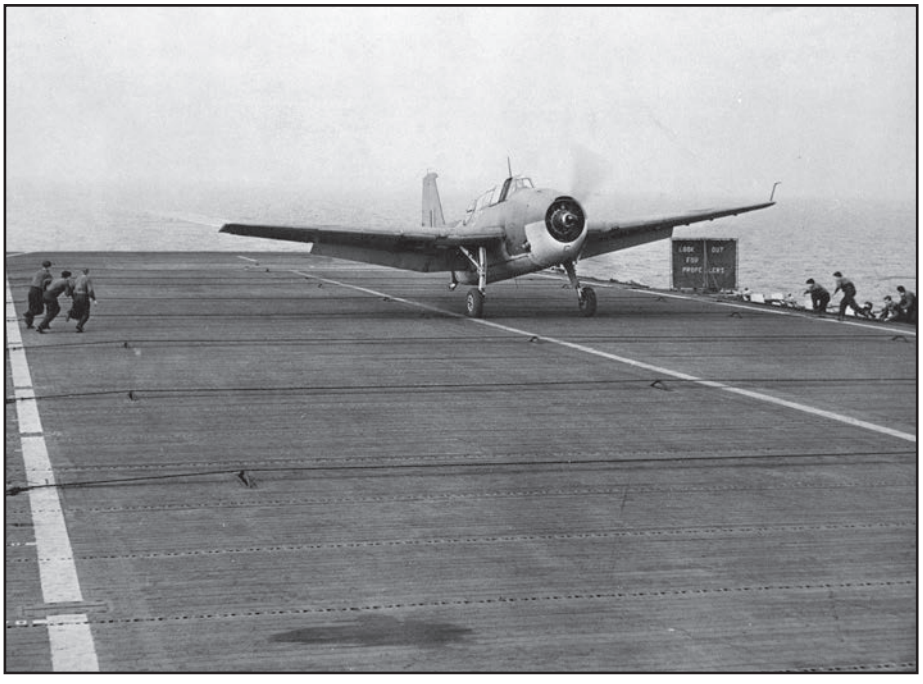


North Vancouver for an examination of her hull. Fortunately, no damage had been sustained as a result of the grounding, and the re-embarkation of stores began again. *Nabob* departed Burrard drydock on 1 February 1944, resumed work-ups for the next few days, and on 7 February sailed for San Francisco and active duty.[15]

Upon arrival at San Francisco the Royal Navy's 852 Squadron of 12 Grumman Avenger bombing aircraft was embarked by crane.[16] Aircrew and maintenance personnel – all Royal Navy – also joined at that time. *Nabob* was now fully manned. The crew, with the squadrons embarked, comprised 504 RCN who were mainly responsible for operating the ship, and 327 RN, and nine Royal New Zealand Navy personnel, who mainly comprised the aviation organization. In mid-February, the carrier set sail for San Diego the next port of call, with the US destroyer *Ballard* acting as plane guard and the airship K-115 providing air support for the passage. While en route *Nabob* carried out flying trials. The first day of exercises was marred by the loss of one aircraft which ditched into the sea after take-off. Fortunately, the airship was quick to respond and dropped an inflatable life raft for the pilot, who was subsequently picked up by *Ballard*'s motor boat.[17]

Two days later, on 17 February 1944, the carrier berthed at United States Naval Air Station North Island, San Diego, and for the next three days conducted local exercises. Her exercises were cut short when a signal was received ordering the carrier to rendezvous with the escort carrier HMS *Empress* and proceed to Norfolk, Virginia. However, owing to mechanical difficulties, *Empress* could not undertake the passage and *Nabob* was ordered to proceed independently. Three days out the Halifax-bound frigate HMCS *New Waterford* joined as plane guard, and the two ships passed through the Panama Canal. On the next leg of the voyage *Nabob* maintained an anti-submarine patrol as U-boats had been reported in the area. Having detached the frigate for Halifax, *Nabob* secured in Norfolk on 8 March for a short refit. The carrier remained in the Norfolk Navy Yard for ten days undergoing repairs to the echo sounder, an ammeter on the diesel switchboard and the replacement of the screw which had been whistling – probably due to cavitation. In addition, three damaged Avenger aircraft were replaced by three new machines.[18]

While the carrier was undergoing repairs, Lay paid a visit to the British Admiralty Maintenance Representative in Washington, D.C., and to Naval Service Headquarters in Ottawa, in order to rectify certain problems of pay and amenities that were undermining the ship's company's morale.[19] From the date of *Nabob*'s commissioning her complement had been a mixed company of British and Canadian sailors. The greatest area of friction was the differing scale of victualling between Royal Navy and Royal Canadian Navy standards. The general messing standards in the RN were considerably lower, both in quantity and quality, a fact which caused morale problems amongst the ship's company. Compounding the problem was the lack of adequate facilities – recreational, shower, and mess deck space – and problems of overcrowding. In addition, RN ratings were paid at a lower rate than their counterparts in the Canadian navy. All of these factors reduced both efficiency and morale.[20] Captain Lay had been requesting assistance since December 1943, but to no avail. He therefore recommended that "victualling for the whole ship should be based on the RCN scale, if necessary becoming a Canadian commitment; that all allowances for RCN personnel should be at Canadian rates and that all RN ratings should receive the difference of pay between RN and RCN rates, if necessary this being a commitment of the Canadian navy."[21] He also requested that the ship be known as HMCS *Nabob*. This last recommendation, unfortunately, was not acted upon.



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An Avenger torpedo bomber lands on the deck of HMS *Nabob*.

The Admiralty was quite anxious to resolve the problems. As the director of personnel services observed: "if Canada had not come to the rescue over *Nabob* and *Puncher* [the second carrier that the RCN would crew, which commissioned in February 1944], the manning situation would have been far more difficult. I hope, therefore, that a way can be found to get round the messing and pay difficulties."[22]

There were those who felt that if the situation was not rectified the whole project of Canadians manning escort carriers might have to be abandoned. As a result of Lay's efforts and ongoing negotiations between NSHQ, the British Admiralty Maintenance Representative, and the Admiralty, a signal was sent on 6 April 1944, stating that:

> (a) All personnel other than Fleet Air Arm to be paid pay and allowances at Canadian rates. Royal Navy personnel regarded on loan to Royal Canadian Navy.
> (b) Scale and system of victualling in *Nabob* as in Royal Canadian Navy.
> (c) (a) and (b) to be charged to Royal Canadian Navy effective 15 March 1944.[23]

Nabob sailed for New York on 18 March 1944, with a much more contented ship's company as a result of the new agreement. Once again 852 Squadron was given the opportunity to conduct flying exercises and anti-submarine patrols while en route. The following day the carrier arrived in New York and secured alongside No.13 Pier at Staten Island where the squadron's 12 aircraft were struck below in the hangar to make room for 45 P-51 Mustang fighters which were embarked and lashed securely on the flight deck for transportation to Great Britain. With the preparations complete, *Nabob* sailed on 23 March with convoy UT 10 bound for the United Kingdom.

The convoy consisted of 26 ships, under a strong escort of 12 destroyers and the escort oiler USS *Chemig* led by the US cruiser *Cincinnati* in which sailed Captain D.F. Worth, USN, commander task force 68 and senior officer of the escort. With *Nabob*'s squadron struck below she was non-operational and took up a position in the convoy. The passage was uneventful except for two days when a gale forced the convoy to alter course for a short period. Several asdic and high-frequency direction-finding contacts by the escorts did not turn up any U-boats.

When *Nabob* reached Liverpool in northern England on 5 April, she made several unsuccessful attempts to dock in fog. With assistance of tugs, she was then able to secure alongside Gladstone Dock and disembark the American fighter aircraft. The following day, she proceeded to Greenock, Scotland. During that passage, seven Avengers from 852 Squadron were launched and flown to the RN air station at Machrihanish. The remainder of the squadron's aircraft were catapulted off while the carrier was anchored at the Tail-of-the-Bank, Greenock, and joined the rest of the squadron at Machrihanish. *Nabob* then returned to Liverpool for further modifications and refit, which began immediately upon her arrival on 17 April. The work, undertaken by Messrs. Harland and Woolf, included the completion of her flight deck, installation of wireless, high-frequency direction-finding equipment, and radar as well as construction of an aircraft direction room, the replacement of all 20 Mark IV Oerlikon mountings on the forecastle and flight deck, the replacement of six Mark IV Oerlikon mountings on the lower sponsons with Mark VII mountings, and completion of the darkened ship arrangements.[24]

Every opportunity was taken to send officers and ratings ashore for courses. These included aircraft recognition at HMS *Queen Charlotte*, damage control, fire fighting, fighter direction (at Yeovilton), and a plotting course (at HMS *Dryad*). In addition, the personnel of 852 Squadron carried out courses and exercises at the Machrihanish air station. *Nabob* was also paid several ceremonial visits, including one by Vice-Admiral P.W. Nelles, who was now senior Canadian flag officer (overseas) on 21 April 1944. Admiral Sir Max Horton, commander-in-chief, Western Approaches, later paid an informal visit.

During the week 9 to 16 June, as *Nabob* neared completion, she embarked stores and ammunition, fuelled, and the crew throughly cleaned ship. On 17 June, eight days behind schedule, *Nabob* prepared for an intensive work-up program which lasted until the end of July. Most of the work-ups were conducted from the Clyde and Belfast, Northern Ireland, and included catapult trials, flying exercises, high angle 40 mm Bofors shoot, high-frequency direction-finding calibration and navigation exercises. In addition, she conducted anti-submarine detection exercises with the training ship HMS *Philante*, anti-submarine patrols, night deck landings, and oiling at sea with the RN frigate *Bamborough Castle*.[25]

Poor weather continued to plague the carrier's program. According to Captain Lay, "out of the 17 nights allocated for night flying the entire programme had to be cancelled on six nights and curtailed on three others. As regards day flying, out of the 18 days allocated [the] full programme took place on only nine days and was curtailed on four." To make matters worse, *Nabob* was beset with mechanical difficulties. On 8 July problems with the main feed pump for the engine forced her to return to Greenock until 14 July. On 24 July the main circulating pump began acting up and forced the carrier to return to the Naval Air Wharf, Belfast, to effect repairs until 28 July.

LAC PA 168394

Church parade on the flight deck of HMS *Nabob*, January 1944.

Despite these problems there had been a marked improvement in the ship's morale ever since she had left Norfolk. Nevertheless, in Captain Lay's opinion, "the squadron and ship's air staff personnel [had] not produced a smooth running organization, and as a result there [had] been too many delays in take-offs, too many unserviceable aircraft, and too many failures in armament."[26] This did not bode well for the future. One source of difficulty was the high turnover in officers and ratings. In the first six months of *Nabob*'s commission "seventy-one officers exclusive of air squadron personnel joined the ship. The total officer complement was forty-one and had already been completely turned over by the substitution of Canadian for British officers."[27] These frequent changes in personnel did nothing for the morale or the operating efficiency of the ship's company. In fact, Lay had to get rid of two executive officers and he regarded the third as "inefficient."[28] As well, a number of the key RN officers who stood by the ship while she was being modified and who might have compensated for the executive officers' weakness left ship shortly after the RCN personnel arrived.[29] In July another 28 ratings (17 RN and 11 RCN) were discharged by the Admiralty and NSHQ while 16 RN and 32 RCN ratings joined the ship. The appointment of a new commander (flying), Lieutenant-Commander H.J.H. Stephens, RN, would, it was hoped (by the Admiralty and Lay), address the problems on the air side at least. Lay's impression of the air side was confirmed by the flag officer carrier training, Vice-Admiral Sir Arthur L. St. G. Lyster, who after visiting *Nabob* on 21 July 1944 reported to the Admiralty that he "was not at all satisfied with [the ship's company's] progress. [The] state of serviceability of aircraft, functioning of weapons and depth charges were all below an acceptable standard for an operational carrier." Following his inspection of the ship Admiral Lyster had the opportunity to address the ship's company and make his feelings known. This blunt assessment seems to have encouraged the crew in harder training under Stephens, the new commander (flying).[30]

The gunnery crews were also having some problems. On 14 July, for example, one Oerlikon gunnery crew shot away four wireless aerials during the first round. The crews also experienced a power failure just two minutes before the first round was due to commence. As a result, Oerlikon firings were layed and trained by hand. The Bofors firings were obstructed by ships and aircraft, and some groups – no.2 and no.5 – were not able to fire as many rounds as the other crews. Despite these particular problems the performance of the crews was considered satisfactory.[31]

Nabob's training program ended on 30 July 1944, when she returned to the Tail-of-the-Bank, off Greenock. The following day, the escort carrier left the Scottish anchorage in company with a sister ship, HMS *Trumpeter*, in preparation for operational duties. On passing the boom gate

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An Avenger lands on board an escort carrier.

at Scapa Flow both ships joined the Home Fleet and were placed under the administrative orders of Rear-Admiral R.R. McGrigor, commanding First Cruiser Squadron.

Canadian naval authorities had hoped that *Nabob* would be operating in support of the Canadian escort groups assigned to the Mid-Ocean Escort Force in the North Atlantic. There was every indication that this would be the case. During the course of her work-up program she had carried out anti-submarine detection exercises as well as air support group exercises in preparation for trade protection duties. As early as April 1944, *Nabob* had been designated for trade escort duties under the orders of the commander-in-chief, Western Approaches.[32] Admiral Nelles, following his visit to the ship, reported that Captain Lay had been informed by the flag officer carrier training that "*Nabob* would be allocated to the North Atlantic convoy protection service, [although] it seem[ed] probable that the ship [would] operate in conjunction with support ships, and [would] be based in a United Kingdom port."[33] Two months later, on 19 June 1944, Lay proposed that a group of five Canadian destroyers or frigates be allocated to form, with *Nabob*, the first Royal Canadian Navy carrier support group.[34] Subsequent to Lay's request, NSHQ informed the Admiralty that six frigates were working up at Bermuda and would be ready for operations at the end of July. The frigates were to be used as a support force in the Western Atlantic under the operational control of the commander-in-chief, Canadian Northwest Atlantic, Rear-Admiral L.W. Murray, RCN, at Halifax. In order to complete the support group Naval Service Headquarters requested that *Nabob* be placed under the operational control of Canadian authorities.[35] (Lay had proposed something similar as early as January 1943 when he was the director of the operations division. In his memorandum to the vice-chief and chief of the naval staff, Lay pointed out that "if the RCN wished to provide adequate escort for mid-ocean convoys, [it] must have, and be able to man,…aircraft carriers for at least its mid-ocean groups."[36])

In the event, circumstances prevented *Nabob* from seeing service with a Canadian support group. Firstly, the operation of a carrier group under Canadian control in the western Atlantic would require new supporting base facilities at Halifax, whose existing facilities were already over-taxed. That was an argument for the group to operate in the central and eastern ocean under Western Approaches Command, which had the necessary facilities. More important, the Admiralty was faced with the following commitments: maintenance of the offensive in the English Channel until the German U-boats abandoned their attempts to interfere with Operation Overlord; provision of escorts for the Russian convoys, and reorganization of the ocean escort groups in order to permit a reduction in the size of the trans-Atlantic convoys during the forthcoming winter.[37] From the British perspective, the Admiralty "could not afford the manning of a support group chasing the odd U-boat on the west side of the Atlantic"[38] regardless of the group's value in the future. The disposition of German U-boats warranted *Nabob*'s stationing in British home waters, and the Admiralty did not take kindly to Canadian attempts to assert their autonomy in operational matters, despite the fact that Canada was in charge of an alliance operational theatre of war, the Canadian Northwest Atlantic area, for the first time in its history. This attitude was perhaps best illustrated by an unidentified British officer who asserted, "I do not like Naval Service Headquarters proposal [to place an escort carrier under the operational control of the commander-in-chief, Canadian Northwest Atlantic] because it implies the intention to operate the group independently."[39] As late as 11 July, the Admiralty was still not certain whether *Nabob* would be stationed in the Mediterranean or with the Home Fleet. However, by 22 July, the Admiralty was requesting that the support group operate either with the North Russian convoys or in the English Channel. As *Nabob* was still a British ship, Canada

was obliged to acquiesce to British requests.

Nabob arrived at Scapa Flow, the main base of the British Home Fleet in the Orkney Islands to the north of Scotland, on 1 August 1944. She spent the next eight days preparing for operations, including two days of flying training in the practice area west of the Orkneys in company with one of the British fleet destroyers taken over by the RCN, HMCS *Algonquin*. The impending Operation Offspring was designed to force German shipping – both merchant and naval – out of the Norwegian leads between the coast and outlying islands by laying mines.[40] This interdiction of the protected inshore routes would force shipping out into open water where they could more readily be detected and attacked by RAF Coastal Command de Havilland Mosquito and Bristol Beaufighters flying from northern Scotland.

"Force 4" assembled for Operation Offspring consisted of a fleet carrier, HMS *Indefatigable*, two escort carriers, *Nabob* and *Trumpeter*, the cruisers *Kent* and *Devonshire*, and the 26th Destroyer Flotilla, HMS *Myngs*, *Verulam*, *Vigilant*, *Virago*, *Volage* and *Scourge* along with HMCS *Algonquin* and *Sioux*, a second British fleet destroyer that had been transferred to the RCN.[41] *Nabob* sailed on 8 August 1944, in preparation for a full-scale rehearsal of the operation, launching all twelve of her Avengers that afternoon. The following day the force shaped course for the Norwegian coast. It was planned to launch two strikes of Avenger aircraft. The first wave, consisting of 24 planes, would be flown off *Trumpeter* and *Nabob*, lay their mines, return to the carriers to refuel and re-arm and launch a second strike, to sew a total of 48 mines. The fighters from *Indefatigable* were to provide close escort for the Avengers against enemy fighters as well as carry out secondary attacks against suitable targets such as anti-aircraft batteries and radar stations, while a group of Supermarine Seafires attacked Gossen airfield nearby. The Grumman Wildcat fighters from *Nabob* would provide top-cover (combat air patrol) for the fleet throughout the entire operation.[42]

On 10 August 1944, the force reached the flying-off position but could not launch the aircraft until 1300 hours because of poor weather. The first attack nevertheless caught the Germans totally off guard. "Six Messerschmidt 110's were destroyed on the ground at Gossen airfield, hangers and warehouses, and an oil tank were set on fire and the 90-ton minesweeper *R89* was sunk."[43] All aircraft had returned from the first strike by 1430 hours with only minimal damage to one or two of the fighters. The Avengers of 852 Squadron could not land immediately however. Just as the squadron was returning, one of the destroyers picked up an asdic contact dead ahead of *Nabob*. "The rudder was put hard over in an emergency turn and the planes had to continue circling until the carrier could resume the landing-on course." Once the aircraft landed they were checked for damage, fuelled and re-armed in preparation for the second strike.

The second wave took off at 1800 hours with all aircraft airborne by 1815 hours. The Germans were better prepared for the second attack, and anti-aircraft fire was both heavy and accurate in the Lepsorev Channel area. The 12 Avengers from *Nabob* "had the less dangerous task than those from *Trumpeter* as the outer end of Haarhams-fjord was not defended by anti-aircraft batteries as was Lepsorev Channel."[44] Despite stiffening German resistance all 24 mines were sown successfully and the aircraft returned to the carriers by 1945 hours. Having successfully completed the mission, Force 4 withdrew and headed for home. The force had lost one Avenger from *Trumpeter*, and one Fairey Firefly and three Seafires from *Indefatigable*. Operation Offspring was the largest Home Fleet carrier minelaying operation of the war.

On completion of the operation, *Nabob* and *Trumpeter* were detached from Force 4 at 1900 hours on 11 August 1944, in Pentalyn Firth and ordered to proceed to Rosyth, to embark a special type of mine which was to be used in their next sortie with the Home Fleet.[45] Both ships then weighed anchor shortly after midnight on 13 August, bound for Scapa Flow. From 14 August through 17 August, the carrier once again conducted flying exercises in the practice area west of the Orkney Islands in preparation for Operation Goodwood – the largest operation by the Home Fleet's air arm of the war. The operation was to be a repeat of Operation Tungsten, the Fleet Air Arm's attack against the battleship *Tirpitz* on 3 April 1944. The German battleship had seriously limited the scope of operations of the British Home Fleet since January 1942. Simply by positioning herself in the Norwegian fjords, she had become a "fleet in being." The British were forced to devote a large proportion of their naval resources to prevent her from breaking out into the Atlantic or raiding convoys bound for Russia. For their part, the Germans believed that *Tirpitz* also provided some measure of security against a potential Allied invasion of Norway.[46]

The purpose of Operation Goodwood was to immobilize *Tirpitz* prior to the recommencement of the Arctic convoys. The Admiralty's assessment of the situation was that by "June [*Tirpitz*] would be capable of 'limited operations'; and, quite apart from the need to safeguard the Arctic convoys, it was impossible to carry out the strengthening of the Eastern Fleet [British Pacific Fleet] at the expense of the Home Fleet any further until the *Tirpitz* had been sunk or permanently put out of action."[47] Operation Mascot, which was carried

out on 17 July 1944, was designed to do just that. Unfortunately, the Germans were prepared and put up an effective smoke-screen which prevented Fleet Air Arm aircraft from finding their target. Consequently, Operation Goodwood was planned for 22-29 August.

Goodwood was timed to coincide with the passage of convoys JW 59 and RA 59A, just as Tungsten had been timed to cover the passage of JW 58 and RA 58, four months earlier. This would ensure that the convoys would be protected from *Tirpitz* and the convoys could be used to lure U-boats operating in northern waters away from the precious aircraft carriers. In addition, there would be diversionary attacks on Hammerfest and Banak airfield.

The attack on *Tirpitz* was to be carried out by three Fairey Barracuda squadrons from the fleet carriers HMS *Indefatigable*, *Formidable* and *Furious*. Two squadrons of Avengers from HM Ships *Nabob* and *Trumpeter* were to lay special mines near the German battleship, while fighter aircraft carried out strafing runs on Hammerfest and Banak. The fleet was divided into two separate forces. Force 1 under the commander-in-chief Home Fleet in the battleship HMS *Duke of York* included the three fleet carriers, the cruisers HMS *Berwick* and *Devonshire* and 13 destroyers, among them HMCS *Algonquin* and *Sioux*. Force 2 comprised the escort carriers *Nabob* and *Trumpeter*, the cruiser *Kent*, and the five Captain class frigates of the 5th Escort Group, whose senior officer was in HMS *Bickerton*. In support was Force 9 – two oilers with four escorting corvettes.

Nabob weighed anchor on 18 August 1944 and cleared the boom defences at Scapa Flow in company with *Trumpeter*. Force 2, consisting of *Nabob* (guide of the fleet for Force 2) with *Trumpeter* astern and the 5th Escort Group acting as a screen for the carriers proceeded at 17 knots for Norway. Force 1 maintained visual signalling distance with Force 2 for the duration of the passage, reaching the flying-off position in the Arctic Circle north of Tromso on 20 August. That afternoon *Nabob*'s 14 Avengers were armed and ranged on the flight deck in preparation for the first strike.[48] At approximately 2200 hours, *Nabob* was informed by the commander-in-chief, Home Fleet, that the operation had been postponed until 22 August owing to deteriorating weather conditions in the area. The

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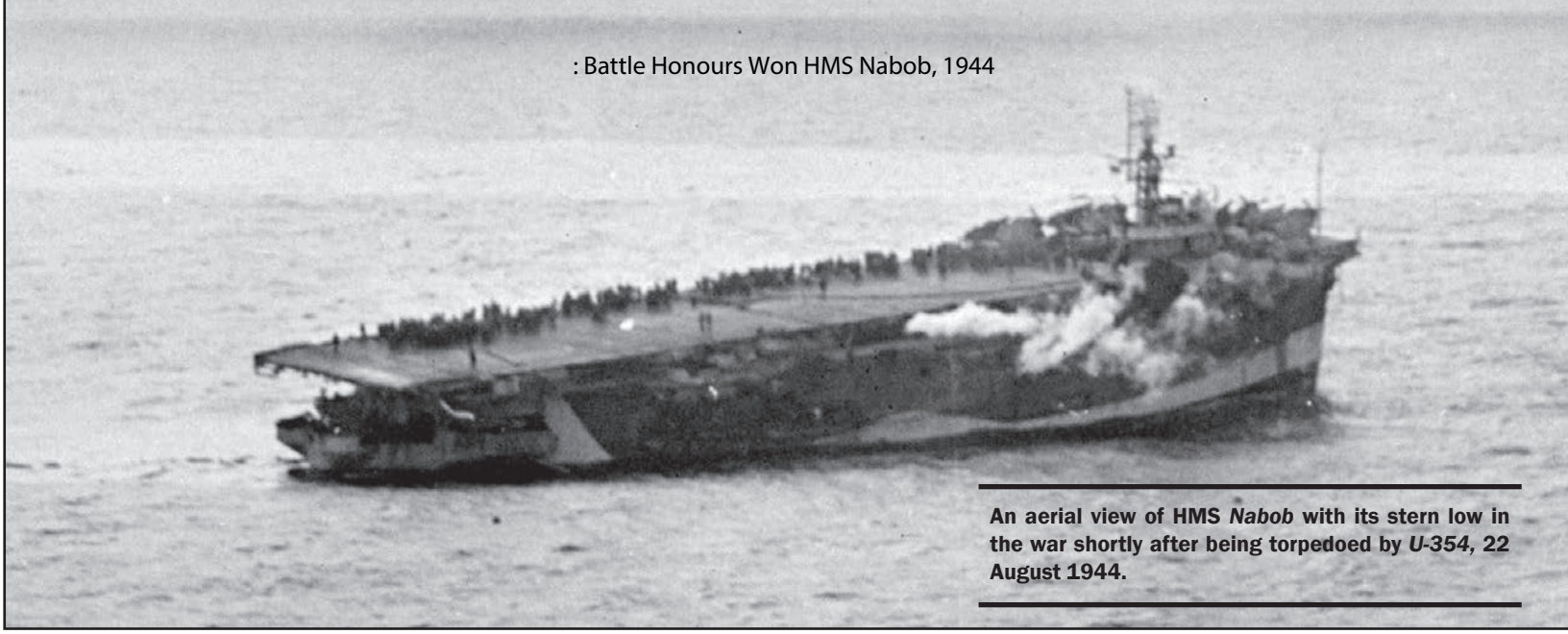
HMS *Nabob* participated in Operation Goodwood in late August 1944 (not to be confused with the land operation of the same name in Normandy in July 1944) which was an attempt to sink or disable the German battleship *Tirpitz*. Since January 1942 the *Tirpitz* had negatively impacted British fleet operations by acting as a "fleet-in-being" from the fjords of Norway. This reconnaissance photo shows the *Tirpitz* hidden in the Aas Fjord, 9 February 1942.



An aerial view of HMS *Nabob* with its stern low in the war shortly after being torpedoed by *U-354*, 22 August 1944.

fleet withdrew to the west to avoid contact with the enemy and to refuel the escorts. Following refuelling the fleet returned to its flying-off position in the early hours of 22 August. Once again, 852 Squadron received disappointing news. The rear-admiral commanding First Cruiser Squadron informed *Nabob* and *Trumpeter* that the Avenger squadrons would not take part in the operation on account of poor weather conditions. Visibility up to 8,000 feet was crucial in order to carry out their assigned role:

> since the Avengers had to see the Barracudas below them in order to synchronize their attacks. Since the visibility was not sufficiently good for this to be done, it was decided that the special mines which were to be laid around the *Tirpitz* should not be thrown away in an attack made under unfavourable conditions.[49]

The cancellation of this part of the operation was a bitter blow to *Nabob*'s crew, and in particular 852 Squadron, which had trained very hard for this opportunity.

Nevertheless, the carrier still had an important role to play in the operation and when the bugle call for action stations sounded at 1100 hours the four Wildcat fighters were fuelled and ranged on the deck in preparation for their launching. At 1225 hours, the fighters were launched from *Nabob*'s deck to provide top-cover for the rest of the fleet. In the meantime, 32 Barracudas, 24 Chance-Vought Corsairs, 11 Fairey Fireflies, nine Grumman Hellcat fighter-bombers, and eight Seafires (of *Indefatigable*'s No.24 Fighter Wing) formed up and headed for *Tirpitz*. However, solid cloud cover at 1,500 feet forced the Barracudas and Corsairs to return to their carriers. The Seafires continued on course for Banak airfield and the Kolvick seaplane base, while the Fireflies and Hellcats attacked the German battleship.[50] Despite the fact that the Germans were caught unaware, no hits were registered on the massive ship. The only damage inflicted was the destruction of *Tirpitz*'s two AR 196As aircraft; a U-boat (*U-965*) at Hammerfest and the seaplane anchorage at Bukta were strafed.

Meanwhile *Nabob*'s four Wildcat fighters continued to provide air cover for the fleet until 1504 hours when they were landed back on board the carrier. At 1530 hours action stations were secured and defence stations closed up, and HM Ships *Kent*, *Trumpeter*, *Nabob*, and the 5th Escort Group were detached westward with instructions to refuel the destroyer escorts. The Canadian-manned carrier was tasked to fuel three destroyers, commencing at 1800 hours, while *Trumpeter*'s aircraft carried out anti-submarine patrols in the immediate vicinity. The weather was clear with good visibility up to 20 miles and the sea was slight and the swell moderate – perfect conditions for *Trumpeter*'s aircraft on the lookout for German U-boats which might be operating in the area. *Nabob*'s flight deck had been cleared of aircraft and the crew was in middle of preparing the buoyant hose for refuelling, when at 1716 hours the carrier was torpedoed on the starboard side aft by *U-354*, ripping a hole 32 feet in diameter in the ship's side below the waterline. At the time of her torpedoing, *Nabob* was approximately 100 nautical miles northwest of Alten Fjord and had been on a zig-zag course.[51]

Nabob's electrical power immediately failed as a result of the torpedoing. This, in turn, caused all the auxiliary machinery in the engine room to fail. Within two minutes the main engines had shut down and the temperature in the engine room climbed rapidly to 150 degrees as the ventilation fans ceased to function. Immediately after the torpedo struck, "the ship rapidly trimmed down by fourteen feet by the stern to a draught of thirty-eight feet and took [on] a seven-degree list, her draught finally increasing to forty-two feet."[52] The compartments in the immediate vicinity of the damage were evacuated and the hatches

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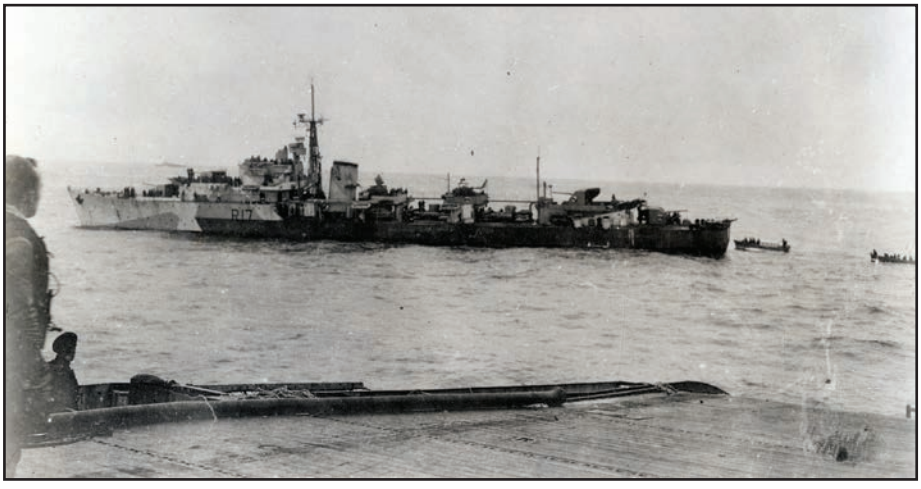

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Top: Personnel line the port side of the flight deck of HMS *Nabob* shortly after the ship was torpedoed.

Middle: HMS *Kempthorne* moves in close to the damaged escort carrier to facilitate the transfer of casualties.

Bottom: Survivors from HMS *Nabob* being transferred to the Canadian destroyer HMCS *Algonquin*.

were closed, but the large horizontal hatches throughout the ship were not watertight. Consequently, the ship flooded up to the galley deck, just below the main hanger deck. Due to the rapidity of the stern settling, "it first appeared as if *Nabob* would sink quickly, and all boats, carley floats, and rafts, were put over the side and the ship's company ordered to prepare to abandon ship."[53] At 1815 hours, almost an hour after the torpedo struck, 214 ratings and ten injured men were transferred to HMS *Kempthorne*. Most of the injuries had occurred in and around the spirit room where the rum issue was being dispensed at the time of the attack. The explosion destroyed or put out of action the "main galley, bakery, vegetable preparing room, scullery, all refrigerators, provision room, main provision stores, and some of the crews' berthing and sleeping areas. In addition, several other compartments including the messing assembly, powder and bomb storage areas were rendered useless due to flooding."[54] Damage control parties immediately began the task of shoring up bulkheads and the decks with timber already stored aboard the carrier. By 1850 hours it was reported that the engine room bulkhead was holding and that the engines, propeller shaft, and the propeller were undamaged, and that it would be possible to make the necessary repairs to get underway.

In the meantime, all unnecessary weight was being jettisoned from *Nabob*, including ammunition, depth charges, even the 5-inch guns were dismantled and thrown overboard. The aircraft handling party moved all the aircraft in the hangar as far forward and to port as possible to counteract the list of the ship and to raise the stern. "None of the escorts had been in asdic contact with a U-boat and it was presumed that she had been hit by a 'Gnat' torpedo fired at extreme range."[55] While conducting a search for the U-boat,

HMS *Bickerton* was torpedoed at 1724 hours, the stern of the frigate being blown off and more than forty men killed in the explosion.[56] The frigate was eventually scuttled with a torpedo from HMS *Vigilant.* At the time time of the attack, HM Ships *Kempthorne*, *Vigilante*, *Alymer*, and *Bligh* were in the area, and *Kempthorne* was immediately detached to pick up all the remaining survivors while the remainder of the ships conducted a search, but to no avail.[57]

By 1900 hours flooding was under control and one hour later *Nabob*'s engine room began to raise steam in preparation for getting underway. At the same time preparations were under way to transfer 173 men of 852 Squadron to the attending destroyers, leaving onboard the squadron's air staff officers. Finally, after more than three hours of frenzied work by the ship's company the carrier gathered way and shaped course for Scapa Flow at six knots. For the passage home, she was escorted by HM Ships *Kempthorne*, *Aylmer* and *Bligh*.

The carrier and her escorts obtained a series of high-frequency/direction-finding contacts which indicated that a U-boat was following astern. By 0230 hours, 23 August, the submarine had closed to 3,600 yards and it was necessary to alter course in order to put more distance between the stricken carrier and the U-boat. Surprisingly, *Nabob* was able to launch two Avengers off her sloping flight deck to chase the submarine off. Although the U-boat was never sighted credit was given to the aircrews for keeping the U-boat submerged, thereby giving *Nabob* the opportunity to make good her escape. After providing anti-submarine patrols for three-and-a-half hours, the Avenger pilots had to face the dangerous task of landing on the canted flight deck. Landing on an escort carrier's flight deck was daunting under the best of conditions. The first Avenger landed aboard without incident.

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HMS *Nabob* in drydock showing the 32-foot hole caused by the torpedo strike.

The second aircraft, however, was not so fortunate. Weather conditions were deteriorating and the ship's movement caused the plane to crash into the barrier damaging six aircraft ranged on the forward part of the flight deck. As a result, two Avengers were seriously damaged – and were subsequently jettisoned – while the other two Avengers and two Wildcats were slightly damaged.[58] Later that day, 23 August, the carrier was joined by HMS *Keats*, HMCS *Algonquin*, and HMS *Trumpeter* who followed astern and provided air escort. Lay transferred another 202 ratings and the ship's chaplain to *Algonquin.* Shoring up operations continued throughout the rest of the passage as did the jettisoning of unnecessary equipment further to reduce the draught.

By 24 August the weather was deteriorating rapidly and the carrier found herself in the middle of a gale. According to Captain Lay's report the "sea was steep the swells were short."[59] The gale buffeted the carrier for eleven hours, but the ship was able to remain on course and maintain a speed of ten knots. Fortunately for *Nabob* the bulkheads and shoring

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Captain Lay (left) with Admiral Sir Henry R. Moore on board HMS Nabob to inspect the damage, 3 September 1944. It is remarkable that the ship was able to survive such massive damage, but Royal Navy standards along with the exemplary work of the ship's damage control parties combined to save the ship.

held. By the following day the sea had moderated and although several HF/DF bearings were obtained, they turned out to be false alarms. As *Nabob* approached British waters additional air cover was provided for the stricken carrier by shore-based Consolidated Catalinas and Short Sunderland flying boats, which provided cover for two days. Meanwhile, *Trumpeter* continued to fly anti-submarine patrols. *Nabob* finally limped into Scapa Flow on 27 August and secured alongside, having covered 1,093 miles in four days and five nights. It was a miracle that she had made it all.

Indeed, in the words of Rear-Admiral R.R. McGrigor, commanding First Cruiser Squadron, "looking at her from a distance of seven miles I never expected her to survive."[60] That *Nabob* did survive can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, the extensive modifications carried out by Burrard Drydock and Shipbuilding Company, to Royal Navy standards, in all likelihood prevented a serious aviation gas or bomb magazine explosion of the kind that had doomed earlier escort carriers. Secondly, exemplary work was carried out by the ship's company, particularly the damage control and electrical parties, engine room personnel and the aircraft handling parties who all contributed to the common cause.[61] Finally, according to Captain Lay, *Nabob* was particularly fortunate in having more than its share of heavy timber, used for repair and shoring operations: "very little timber is allowed to United States Navy ships of the same type by the Bureau of Ships and it cannot be doubted that a United States ship under the same circumstances would almost certainly have lost many of the bulkheads saved in *Nabob* by quick shoring."[62] In *Nabob*'s case the lengthy delays in "Anglicizing" the ship probably prevented heavy loss of life.

As it was, eleven RCN and ten RN ratings were killed or missing as a result of the explosion with a further five RCN and one RN ratings injured. Indeed, the whole *Tirpitz* operation was disappointing. Besides the loss of HM Ships *Nabob* and *Bickerton*, the Fleet Air Arm lost one Barracuda and ten fighters in the 242 sorties launched against the German battleship. This figure does not include the six aircraft damaged on *Nabob*. Despite a direct hit with a 1,600 pound armour piercing bomb – which failed to explode – and another hit with a 500 pound bomb, only superficial damage was inflicted on the *Tirpitz*. Norman Polmar has argued that Operation Goodwood was "the most striking failure of the Fleet Air Arm during World War II"[63] for failing to sink the great battleship. He attributes the failure directly to the poor performance of the Barracuda aircraft in terms of speed and bomb-load. He failed, however, to take into account the mitigating factors: poor weather conditions, the withdrawal of two escort carriers and their twenty-four Avenger aircraft, and the determined resistance of the Germans. While Operation Goodwood failed to achieve its primary objective, the sinking of *Tirpitz*, it did achieve its secondary goal, the demobilization – albeit brief – of the ship. Damage to the deck and superstructure, casualties amongst the crew, and the diminution of her ammunition stocks resulted in the German battleship being temporarily rendered non-operational. Insofar as *Nabob* was concerned, she was avenged on 23 August 1944, when aircraft operating from HMS *Vindex* sank *U-354*.

HMS *Nabob* certainly would have been repaired and put back into service if sentiment had prevailed, but her damage was so extensive and the British yards so overcrowded that the Admiralty decided to cannibalize her to provide parts for other ships.[64] Had *Nabob* not been damaged, she would have been used in an air support role providing distant cover for the Russian convoy JW 59. This role would have been more in line with the training that she received during her intensive work up program. Whether she would

have ever come under Canadian operational control and operated in the western Atlantic, however, is doubtful since all attempts to have her commissioned as a Canadian warship failed. *Nabob* remained at Scapa Flow until 8 September 1944, when she proceeded to Rosyth where she was destored and paid off on 30 September of that same year. Although *Nabob* had been in commission for just a little over one year and had taken part in only two operations – in which she was used as a fleet carrier – she deserves an honourable place in Canadian naval history for her valuable contribution to a fledgling Canadian naval air arm, this despite the fact that *Nabob* remained an HM Ship throughout her commission. The manning of HMS *Nabob* provided Canadians with experience in the operation of this class of vessel and would prove invaluable when the time came to operate the light fleet carriers that Canada acquired from Great Britain following the end of the war. For *Nabob*'s part in Operation Goodwood she received "Tirpitz" as a battle honour. With the paying off of *Nabob*, Canadian personnel were left manning only one escort carrier – HMS *Puncher*, which, after ferrying aircraft in the latter part of 1944, joined the British Home Fleet for northern operations. She, too, received a battle honour, "Norway 1945."

By war's end, fifty-five officers of the RCN and RCNVR had undergone training as pilots and observers with the Fleet Air Arm. Also, approximately 225 men were undergoing training as air fitters and air mechanics. In addition, twenty-five ratings with sea experience had trained training as naval air gunners. Finally, approximately 600 ratings were "infiltrated" into RN carrier crews to gain experience in light fleet carriers prior to Canada's acquisition of the type. Many of these men would serve as the nucleus for Canada's naval air arm in the post-war period. Finally, the aforementioned figures do not include the more than 1,000 Canadian personnel who cut their teeth in naval aviation serving in HMS *Nabob* and later HMS *Puncher*.

Notes

1. See, Shawn Cafferky, "The Royal Canadian Navy's Drive for Diversification: Post-War Planning, 1943-1945," *American Neptune* 61, no. 4 (Fall 2001), pp.431-451; J.D.F. Kealy and E.C. Russell, *A History of Canadian Naval Aviation, 1918-1962* (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 1965); Marc Milner, *Canada's Navy: The First Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), ch. 8; Marc Milner, *North Atlantic Run: The Royal Canadian Navy and the Battle for the Convoys* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985); W.A.B. Douglas, Roger Sarty, Michael Whitby, *No Higher Purpose: The Official Operational History of the Royal Canadian Navy in the Second World War, 1939-1943*, Vol. II, Part I (St. Catharines, Ontario: Vanwell Publishing Ltd., 2002).
2. For a detailed discussion of the RCN's plans to acquire and build the Tribal-class destroyers, for example, see, Michael Whitby, "Instruments of Security: The Royal Canadian Navy's Procurement of the Tribal Class Destroyers, 1938-1943," *The Northern Mariner* 2, no. 3 (July 1992), pp.1-15. As Whitby correctly observed, "what better way to ensure the survival of a navy than to have a shipbuilding industry constructing the very warships selected as the principal pillars of the postwar fleet?"
3. Naval Staff History, *The Defeat of the Enemy Attack on Shipping, 1939-1945: A Study of Policy and Operations*, vol. IA, Appendix No.4 (London: Admiralty Historical Section, 1954), p.291.
4. Note from Vice-Chief of the Naval Staff, Rear-Admiral G.C. Jones, to Chief of the Naval Staff, Vice-Admiral P.W. Nelles, 23 February 1943, Directorate of History and Heritage, Department of National Defence (hereafter DHH)1700-219, vol. I.
5. Report by Captain H. Hickling, RN, 1 July 1943, ADM 205/1. The RCN was never satisfied with what it saw as a temporary arrangement to man two small carriers from the RN, and continued to press for the creation of its own naval air arm, and later the acquisition of light fleet carriers. For a detailed history of the RCN's plans to create its own naval air branch see: Shawn Cafferky, "Towards the Balanced Fleet: A History of the Royal Canadian Naval Air Service, 1943-1945" (M.A. Thesis, University of Victoria, 1987) and "The Royal Canadian Navy's Drive for Diversification," pp.431-451; J.D.F. Kealy and E.C. Russell, *A History of Canadian Naval Aviation, 1918-1962*, and Donald E. Graves, "The Royal Canadian Navy and Naval Aviation, 1942-1944" (Unpublished DHH Narrative, May 1989).
6. HMS *Nabob*, a Smiter-class escort carrier, displaced 15,390 tons and was 495' 8" in length. She had a breadth, at the flight deck, of 107' 2" and a draft of 25' 5". Her maximum speed was 18 knots. Armament consisted of two 5-inch 38 calibre dual purpose guns, with 40 mm Bofors and 20 mm Oerlikons for anti-aircraft defence. Twelve to eighteen aircraft, depending on type, could be operated from the carrier.
7. Naval Staff History, *The Defeat of the Enemy Attack on Shipping, 1939-1945: A Study of Policy and Operations*, p.60.
8. Norman Friedman, *U.S. Aircraft Carriers* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1983), p.177.
9. Ibid.
10. Kenneth Poolman, *Escort Carriers 1941-1945: An Account of British Escort Carriers in Trade Protection* (London: Ian Allen Ltd., 1972), p.88.
11. Ibid., p.89.
12. Canadian sailors were to be regarded as "additional" but were to relieve RN personnel as soon as Lay considered that this could be accomplished. See, "Report on Details of Royal Navy - Royal Canadian Navy Administration in HMS *Nabob*," 10 April 1944, ADM 1/16045, UK, The National Archives (hereafter TNA).
13. Interview conducted with Rear-Admiral Charles Dillon, RCN (Retired) by author, 19 June 1989. There is some confusion in the literature as to the actual sequence of events. Rear-Admiral H. Nelson Lay has stated in his memoirs that all but one of the squadron's aircraft had landed on prior to the grounding. This version does not correspond to other accounts, namely Charles Dillon's article, "HMS *Nabob*," in *The Bulletin* (Victoria: Maritime Museum of British Columbia) no.25, June 1974.
14. "Brief History of HMS *Nabob*," pp.5-6, DHH 8000, HMS *Nabob*.
15. Sailing Orders, dated 5 February 1944, Record Group (RG) 24, vol. 11,972, file 262-2, Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC).
16. Squadron 805 was originally assigned to HMS *Nabob*, but as a result of the her grounding the squadron was reassigned.
17. "Brief History of HMS *Nabob*," p.7, DHH 8000, HMS *Nabob*.
18. Report of Proceedings, HMS *Nabob* 9 March - 3 April 1944, RG 24, vol. 11,304, file CS 159-10-22, LAC.
19. Ibid. Captain Lay visited the aforementioned authorities between 13-16 March 1944.
20. "Report on Living Conditions, Morale, of Royal Canadian Navy Personnel in HMS *Nabob*," 8 March 1944, RG 24, vol. 11,304, file CS 159-10-22, LAC and ADM 1/16045, TNA.
21. Ibid.
22. Minute Sheet, No. 4, Director of Personnel Services, Royal Navy, 20 March 1944, ADM 1/16045, TNA.

23. Naval Message from British Admiralty Maintenance Representative to *Nabob* (repeated) Admiralty, Naval Service Headquarters, Naval Member Canadian Staff, 6 April 1944, RG 24, vol. 11,963, file MS-69, LAC. The desertion of French Canadian ratings at Norfolk, Virginia, in all likelihood strengthened Lay's argument. See "Report on Details of Royal Navy - Royal Canadian Administration in HMS *Nabob*," dated 10 April 1944, ADM 1/16045, TNA. There were about 100 French Canadian ratings serving in *Nabob* at the time who were, in Captain Lay's opinion, "due to race, education, or environment ... apparently not suitable for service in this type of ship."
24. Report of Proceedings, HMS *Nabob*, 4 April - 31 May 1944, RG 24, vol. 11,304, file CS 159-10-22, LAC.
25. Report of Proceedings, HMS *Nabob*, 1-30 June 1944, RG 24, vol. 11,304, file CS 159-10-22, LAC.
26. Report of Proceedings, HMS *Nabob*, 1-31 July 1944, RG 24, vol. 11,304, file CS 159-10-22, LAC; Canadian Ships with the Home Fleet, 1943-1945, Narrative A and B, p.5, DHH 87/48.
27. Canadian Ships with the Home Fleet, 1943-1945, Narrative A and B, p.2, DHH 87/48.
28. H.N. Lay, Memoirs of a Mariner (Ottawa: Lowe-Martin Company Inc., 1982), p.157; "Report on Royal Navy - Royal Canadian Navy Administration in HMS *Nabob*," 10 April 1944, ADM 1/16045, TNA.
29. See, "Report on Details of Royal Navy - Royal Canadian Navy Administration in HMS *Nabob*," as cited in Donald E. Graves, "The Royal Canadian Navy and Naval Aviation, 1942-1944," p.142.
30. Canadian Ships with the Home Fleet, 1943-1945, Narrative A and B, p.5, DHH 87/48.
31. Remarks on Gunnery Practice, 14 July 1944, Report of Proceedings - HMS *Nabob*, 1-31 July 1944, RG 24, vol. 11,304, file CS 159-10-22, LAC.
32. Naval Message from Commanding Officer, HMS *Nabob*, to Flag Officer Carrier Training, 19 June 1944 and Admiralty signal 091903/April to Commander-in-Chief, Western Approaches, ADM 1/16032, TNA.
33. Senior Canadian Flag Officer (Overseas) Report on Visit to HMS *Nabob*, 24 April 1944, RG 24, vol. 6744, file 8000-500/329, LAC.
34. Commanding Officer HMS *Nabob*, Captain H.N. Lay, to Flag Officer Carrier Training, 19 June 1944, ADM 1/16032, TNA.
35. Naval Service Headquarters to Admiralty, 10 July 1944, ADM 1/16032, TNA.
36. Memorandum, "Formation of Canadian Fleet Air Arm," Director of Operations Division, Captain H.N. Lay, to Vice-Chief of the Naval Staff and Chief of the Naval Staff, 11 January 1943, DHH 1700-219, vol. I.
37. Admiralty to Naval Service Headquarters, 22 July 1944, ADM 1/16032, TNA.
38. Minute Sheet no. 1, Director of Operations Division to the Admiralty, 13 July 1944, ADM 1/16032, TNA.
39. Ibid. This comment was pencilled in on the Minute Sheet.
40. Canadian Ships with the Home Fleet, 1943-1945, Narrative A and B, p.1, DHH 87/48.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid.
43. Admiralty Historical Section, *The Development of British Naval Aviation, 1919-1945*, vol. II, BR 1736 (53) (1) Appendix X (London: July 1954).
44. Brief History of *Nabob*, p.12, DHH 8000 HMS *Nabob*. The total number of aircraft involved in the two strikes were: forty-seven Avengers (Squadrons 846 and 852), thirty-two Seafire III's (Squadrons 894 and 887), twenty-eight Fireflies (Squadron 1770), two Hellcats (Squadron 1840), the last two squadrons involved in escort and anti-flak duties. These figures do not include the Wildcats used to provide a combat air patrol over the fleet. See, Admiralty Historical Section, *The Development of British Naval Aviation*, vol. II, Appendix X.
45. Report of Proceedings - HMS *Nabob*, 1-31 August 1944, RG 24, vol. 11,304, file CS 159-10-22, LAC.
46. Admiral Karl Doenitz, *Ten Years and Twenty Days*, trans. by R.H. Stevens (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson Ltd., 1959), pp.385-386.
47. S.W. Roskill, *The War at Sea 1939-1945: The Offensive*, vol. III (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1961), pp.155-156.
48. "Report of Torpedo Damage to HMS *Nabob* on 22 August 1944, including Movements from 18-27 August 1944," RG 24, vol. 11,751, file 159-10-24, LAC. Prior to Operation Goodwood, *Nabob*'s complement of aircraft was adjusted to fourteen Avengers and four Wildcats as required by the operation. The Wildcat (series FM-1 and FM-2) fighters built by General Motors were known as Martlets prior to 1944 in the Fleet Air Arm. It was not until 1944 that the Royal Navy accepted American names for their aircraft.
49. Canadian Ships with the Home Fleet, 1943-1945, Narrative A and B, DHH 87/48. These special mines were designed to inflict heavy underwater damage up to thirty feet away from the battleship.
50. David Brown, *Tirpitz the Floating Fortress* (London: Arms and Armour Press, 1977), p.38.
51. "Report of Torpedo Damage to HMS *Nabob* on 22 August 1944," RG 24, vol. 11,751, file 159-10-24, LAC.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid.
54. Ibid. Because of the damage the crew who remained onboard the carrier for the trip back to Scapa Flow were forced to survive on short rations and rum.
55. Brief History of HMS *Nabob*, p.15, DHH 8000 - HMS *Nabob*. In fact, *Nabob* had been struck by a FAT torpedo and *Bickerton* was hit by a GNAT.
56. J.D.F. Kealy and E.C. Russell, *A History of Canadian Naval Aviation, 1918-1962*, p.27.
57. The ships conducted what was known as an "Observant," which was a two-mile square, counter-clockwise search around a center, or datum point, usually the last known position of a submarine. In this case, the datum point was *Nabob*. See, Brief History of HMS *Nabob*, p.16, DHH 8000 - HMS *Nabob*.
58. "Report of Torpedo Damage to HMS *Nabob* on 22 August 1944," RG 24, vol. 11,751, file 159-10-24, LAC.
59. Ibid; Report of Proceedings - HMS *Nabob*, 1-31 August 1944, RG 24, vol. 11,304, file CS 159-10-22, LAC. Waves in a strong gale could reach as high as thirty-four feet. A short swell means a swell where the length or distance between each successive top of swell is less than 300 feet. See, Admiralty Historical Section, *The Development of British Naval Aviation, 1919-1945*, vol. II, Appendix XXX.
60. Rear-Admiral Commanding First Cruiser Squadron to Commander-in-Chief, Home Fleet, in "Report of Torpedo Damage to HMS *Nabob* on 22 August 1944, RG 24, vol. 11,751, file 159-10-24, LAC.
61. "Report of Torpedo Damage to HMS *Nabob* on 22 August 1944," RG 24, vol. 11,751, file 159-10-24, LAC. In Captain Lay's report special mention was made of the work carried out by the electrical party under Lieutenant-Commander (EL) H.H. Jones, RCNVR; the engine room department under Commander (E) C.I. Hichcliffe, RCNVR; the damage control arrangements under the direction of the Senior Engineer, Lieutenant (E) D.T. Forster, RCN, and the Chief Shipwright, James R. Ball.
62. Ibid.
63. Norman Polmar, *Aircraft Carriers: A Graphic History of Carrier Aviation and Its Influence on World Events* (New York: Doubleday and Company Inc., 1969), p.310.
64. J.D.F. Kealy and E.C. Russell, *A History of Canadian Naval Aviation, 1918-1962*, p.28.

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