

Another former Canadian warship has been in the news recently in relation to the Great lakes. Quite a number of retired naval vessels have been sunk in recent years to create dive sites and fish habitats, but so far none of these have been put down on the lakes. That will all change, but not until late in 2002 or early in 2003. The vessel involved is the Restigouche class destroyer-escort GATINEAU which was built by Davie at Lauzon - laid down in 1953 and launched in 1957. The steam turbine ship did visit the lakes on occasion. She was decommissioned in 1996 and has been in lay-up at Halifax. Plans call for her to be properly cleaned out and then sunk as a dive site off Kingston in Lake Ontario. GATINEAU (DDE 236) is 370 feet in length and 42 feet in the beam, and as far as we are aware, she will be the largest deliberately created dive site on the lakes.

On December 21st, towed by the McKeil tug CARROL C 1 and assisted by VAC, the McKeil barge LE VENT cleared the Port Weller Dry Docks fit-out berth and proceeded to Hamilton, where the final work on her conversion of carry jet aviation fuel will be completed over the winter months.

With CANADIAN CENTURY already at the Port Weller yard for a good early start on her winter midbody renewal work (presumably to be similar to the reconstruction done on TADOUSSAC last winter), the next arrival at the drydock was the Provmar bunkering tanker HAMILTON ENERGY. The ENERGY was rammed in the stern by a salt-water vessel last spring, and the damage was sufficiently severe that she could not operate under her own power and had to be pushed around Hamilton Harbour by McKeil tugs all year. Over the winter, the Port Weller shipyard will make proper repairs to the ENERGY's stern and rudder, and an entirely new engine will be fitted. Under tow of GLENEVIS, HAMILTON ENERGY arrived at Port Weller on December 15th.

The next winter-work arrival at the Port Weller yard was Algoma Central's salt-carrier SAUNIERE, which arrived at the fit-out wall on December 23rd. SAUNIERE, a rare visitor to the lakes, will undergo work on her hydraulics and repairs to her unloading boom, as well as the replacement of 49 bottom plates. The Port Weller shipyard will be a busy place this winter!

Once again this winter, Toronto Harbour is playing lay-up host to five ships loaded with storage cargoes of sugar for the Redpath plant. CANADIAN VENTURE unloaded her cargo at the Jarvis Street facility shortly after arriving in port, but CANADIAN MARINER, CANADIAN LEADER, QUEBECOIS and ALGOCAPE laid up with their cargoes still aboard. In lay-up, they joined the retired SEAWAY QUEEN, and the ALGOISLE which did not operate at all in 2001.

Another unusual lay-up at Toronto this winter is the Essroc cement barge METIS. After completing her summer service on the Gulf of St. Lawrence, she came up to Hamilton during the autumn, reportedly for the repair of some damage that she had suffered whilst out east. Essroc had made tentative plans to lay her up at Charlotte (Rochester), New York, with a storage cargo for the winter, but the weather conditions were such that STEPHEN B. ROMAN was able to move enough cement to Charlotte that a storage cargo was not necessary. METIS was towed from Hamilton to Toronto on or about December 23rd and was moored on the south side of the Essroc pier, Cherry Street at Villiers Street.

Just off the starboard bow of METIS and lying along the inner end of the slip is the former tug GLENMONT, which has been a non-operative denizen of Toronto harbour for many years. For the last two years, GLENMONT has been slowly undergoing conversion to a sail-powered excursion boat, and after reposing atop the pier for the lower hull work, she was launched back into the bay's waters this autumn. GLENMONT will not be recognizable as a former Glen class tug when the reconstruction work has been completed. Close by GLENMONT's bow and just astern of the idle SEAWAY QUEEN lies the former Canadian Coast Guard vessel VERENDRYE, now owned by private interests and seldom seen in operation.