

Gunboats on the Great Lakes

When the Fenians invaded Canada in 1866, militia units weren't the only defenders mobilized in Canada West. A number of gunboats were also pressed into service, some for just a few days, some for more than two years.



HMG *Britomart*

Of the 16 gunboats on the Great Lakes, three of the most interesting were *Britomart*, *Heron* and *Cherub*, shallow-draft vessels powered by both steam and sail. Sent by the British Navy to patrol the waters of Lakes Ontario, Erie and Huron, the gunboats provided Canadians with a sense of security in the aftermath of the Fenian invasion.

Drawing on ships' logs, naval records and contemporary newspaper reports, Cheryl MacDonald traces the social history of the gunboats and their crews.

Their story -- which has never been told before -- offers a fascinating glimpse into Canadian life at the dawn of Confederation.

The talk runs 30-45 minutes and includes a brief slide presentation of rare 1860s photographs.

For further information, please contact Cheryl at 905-776-2406 or by e-mail:

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Places visited by *Britomart*, *Cherub* and *Heron*, 1866-1868: Amherstburg • Bayfield • Belleville • Brockville • Chippawa (Niagara Falls) • Collingwood • Cornwall • Dunnville • Fort Erie • Gananoque • Goderich • Hamilton • Kingston • Niagara-on-the-Lake • Picton • Port Colborne • Port Dalhousie • Port Dover • Port Hope • Port Stanley • Prescott • Sandwich • Sarnia • Southampton • Toronto • Whitby • Windsor. *Britomart* wintered in Dunnville, on the Grand River near Lake Erie; *Cherub* in Goderich and *Heron* in Toronto.

Cheryl MacDonald has been writing professionally since 1976. Along with a long-running weekly history column in the *Simcoe Times-Reformer*, Cheryl has written numerous historical articles for magazines such as *The Beaver*, *Old Farmer's Almanac* and *Maclean's*. A graduate of the University of Waterloo and McMaster University with an M.A. in history, she has written, co-authored or edited nearly 40 books of historical non-fiction, including *Adelaide Hoodless: Domestic Crusader*, *Niagara Daredevils*, *Celebrated Pets* and *Deadly Women of Ontario*.