

COMMUNITY



Bramalea resident Hugh Birks became emotional during his recent visit to the Georgetown Cenotaph considering his British military involvement with anti-aircraft guns during World War II and the liberation of Holland. The Dutch demonstrated their appreciation marking the 70th anniversary of Canadian war efforts by planting tulips at memorials such as the Georgetown Cenotaph.

Photo by Eamonn Maher

99 year old WWII veteran visits Georgetown Cenotaph

World War II veteran Hugh Birks, who turns 99 in August, paid a visit to the Georgetown Cenotaph earlier this month to view the recently bloomed tulips that rekindled many memories and emotions from his distinguished days in the British military.

The Bramalea resident, who served with the 63rd Royal Artillery 189 Light Anti-Aircraft battery, recognized that the guns at the Georgetown Cenotaph are the same as he saw used in England, Italy and North Africa during his decorated military career.

An officer aboard the Strathallan, a troop ship with more than 5,000 aboard that was

torpedoed and eventually sank by a German U-Boat in December 1942 on its way to the Mediterranean, Birks has been credited with playing a key role in the one of the largest ship-to-ship rescues in British Naval history for staying with the vessel's anti-aircraft guns as the powerless ship was besieged by the enemy.

Birks's younger brother George was also involved in the liberation of Holland.

Hugh and wife Catherine, 95, have been confirmed to be the oldest married couple in Brampton at 70 years, with their wedding taking place on Aug. 20, 1945.

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