

'I shed tears every year,' says veteran

Although it was nearly 60 years ago, Bob McMenemy's memories of the Second World War are still very vivid.

McMenemy, 80, joined the Highland Light Infantry of Canada in 1940, shortly after he turned 19.

He said the slogan at the time was "join the Highland Light Infantry and be with your pals." He joined and did end up with many of his pals as several of the infantry's members were from the Acton and Georgetown area.

He was sent overseas to England in 1941 after being stationed in Stratford, Quebec City and Debert, Nova Scotia. Once there he continued to train in Sussex, Kent and Scotland and said he didn't hit France until D-Day, June 6, 1944.

"Probably the most talked about action we were in was on the 8th of July in 1944," said McMenemy.

His company attacked the village of Buron, outside of Caen and they lost 168 men in the battle.

"Most of them were my friends," said McMenemy, who rose to the rank of sergeant in the intelligence section of his



Bob McMenemy (centre) poses with war buddies Ray Hillier (left) of Acton and Trevor Williams of Glen Williams. Hillier was killed in battle in 1944.

infantry,

"It was our first action and probably the most difficult."

"When you attack a prepared position, the defenders have the advantage," he said. "We captured our objective and Caen fell the next day."

He remembers returning home to Georgetown in February 1946.

"It was very emotional, particularly the first time you see Canada."

Remembrance Day is very important to the 70-year Georgetown resident.

"It's a day of recollection and thanksgiving in a way, that you made it, and you remember so many who didn't. I shed tears at the cenotaph every year."

—By Lisa Tallyn, staff writer

The horrors of war set in years later for exuberant young English nurse

For Betty Parry, the war seemed much more real long after it was over.

Though she had many very real experiences, such as getting caught in a bombing raid as she was walking home one night, the youthful exuberance of a 19-year-old made the war seem like an adventure. The reality hit home during a trip to Holland years later.

Stepping off the bus at one of the soldier cemeteries, Parry said it was overwhelming.

"It just breaks your heart. Two thousand graves. You don't realize how many graves that is until you go see it— each with a little cross and their name. It's unbelievable. And these were young men who were my contemporaries."

Parry was riding with a cycling club near her home in Bournemouth when she heard on a cafe radio that the Germans had invaded Poland. With a father who had served in the First World War, she knew life was about to change.

Parry was working as a pharmacist's assistant when the war broke out. She joined

the VAD (Voluntary Aid Detachment) and worked as a nurse in a local hospital. When she went into full-time service she was posted at a children's station, where they cared for



BETTY PARRY

children brought in from London to protect them from the bombing.

"It's really kind of sad. When the nurses would take them home they wouldn't even know their parents because they were too young when they left."

Parry met her late husband

Tom at a dance. They were married in 1944 and he had to rejoin his regiment the next day. She only saw him twice more before he joined in the D-Day invasion. As the casualties were reported, Parry waited anxiously for a week before receiving word that her new husband had survived.

Things had changed, especially in her home town on the south shore of England.


"There were big rolls of barbed wire on the beach and there was a beautiful pier but they blew it up because they were afraid the Germans would land on it. It was really strange to see because I'd spent so many hours having fun on that beach."

Parry and her husband moved to Canada in 1946, settling in Georgetown, to "get away from the starkness" of post-war England.

Now on Remembrance Day, Parry reflects on "how lucky we were that my husband escaped all of that and that we were married 44 years."

She also takes time to recall a boy who teased her in Sunday school—a friend who was later killed after being shot down by a German plane.

—By Herb Garbutt, staff writer



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