

Dutch Queen back in wartime home to celebrate 'bonds of friendship'

By Louise Crosby
Citizen staff writer

It was two minutes before the arrival of Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands from Uplands Airport Monday, and everything was in place on the grounds of Rideau Hall.

The red carpet had just been vacuumed, and positioned around it were dignitaries and staff from the Dutch embassy.

The limousine arrived on the dot of 11:30 a.m. escorted by four RCMP officers on skittish horses. Out stepped Queen Beatrix, rosy-cheeked and smiling in a bright pink coat and soft, grey feathered hat.

To the boom of a 21-gun salute and music by the Canadian Forces Central Band, the Queen inspected the First Canadian Signal Regiment and then joined Gov. Gen. Jeanne Sauvé at the podium.

She told the crowd the nine-day state visit she and her husband Prince Claus are making to Canada is "by no means a

nostalgic trip."

"It is not the re-living of a happy past," she said with barely a trace of a Dutch accent.

"Rather it gives expression to the bonds of friendship, co-operation and mutual trust that link our two nations now."

To escape from the Nazi occupation of Holland, Princess Beatrix, her sister Princess Irene and her mother, then Crown Princess Juliana, made Ottawa their home from 1940 to 1945. Princess Margriet was born in Ottawa in 1943.

Princess Beatrix, nicknamed Trixie, attended kindergarten and the primary grades at Rockcliffe Park School.

So before the Queen disappeared into Rideau Hall for a luncheon with Sauvé and her husband Maurice, Grade 3 student Michael Wielheesen presented her with a bouquet of flowers.

Queen Beatrix's visit also takes her to Halifax, Quebec, Toronto, Burlington, Hamilton, Calgary, Vancouver and Victoria

before it winds up May 17.

After the luncheon, Queen Beatrix met briefly with Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and Opposition Leader John Turner.

Late in the afternoon, before a state dinner at Rideau Hall, she watched as Canadian Environment Minister Tom McMillan and his Dutch counterpart Eduardus Nijpels signed an agreement to share expertise and information on the environment.

Workshops involving experts from the two nations will be conducted and joint projects undertaken. Canada will benefit from work conducted in the Netherlands on nitrogen oxide pollution and the Netherlands has expressed interest in Canada's work on water quality.

Today, the Queen's last day in Ottawa, she and Prince Claus visit the House of Commons and attend a luncheon in the Centre Block. The couple will also take part in a tree-planting ceremony at City Hall to mark the twinning of Ottawa with The Hague.