

More to the Story Than A Photo

GDLS-C Service Rep a Veteran of Afghanistan

By John M. Milner
Lines of Defense Staff

Service Representative Michael Hodgson is used to getting some attention when he drives down the street as part of his job at GDLS-C.

For Michael's ride isn't your ordinary street vehicle.

Michael, along with Scott Murray, is responsible for the transportation of GDLS-C vehicles from Page Street to Militex and other off-site locations. Michael describes his job as having "pretty much anything to do with the movement of the vehicles."

This includes test driving, transportation, even loading the vehicles on to flat beds.

"Every day is different," he says. "We're always on the move."



Many of you may have seen the photo of GDLS-C's Michael Hodgson driving a Stryker through London in the June 3rd issue of *The London Free Press* (he holds his copy) But there's more to Michael's story...

It should come as no surprise that people stop and stare when Michael or Scott take an LAV to the local streets.

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"We see lots of people pull out telephone cameras," Michael says. "It's not uncommon. People do that all the time."

On the rainy afternoon of June 2nd, he drove a Production Stryker ICV down Clarke Road towards Militex. Michael noticed one photographer that stood out, mainly due to the size of her camera. The photographer was Susan Bradnam, and her photo of Michael turning left onto Huron Street appeared in the next issue of the *London Free Press*.

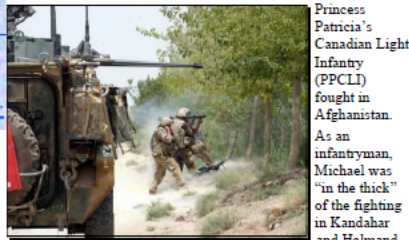
The next day, Michael was at ASU Highbury, where the Commissar called him into his office. "Did you see this?" the Commissar asked, pointing to the photo. It was only then that Michael realized his trip had made the paper.

During his time with the company, Michael has driven the Canadian APC, New Zealand/Australian vehicles, the Duro APV and the RG-31, in addition to the LAV-II, LAV-III and Stryker vehicles.

"Just about everything you see kicking around here, I've driven," Michael says.

But Michael's first brush with the LAVs he and co-worker Scott drive didn't come with his job at GDLS-C.

In 2006, Corporal Michael Hodgson, A Company, 1st Battalion,



With an LAV III in the foreground, Hodgson (right) fires an 84mm rocket launcher in combat in Kandahar Province, Afghanistan. (Contributed photo)

were along with the rest of the PPCLI, part of Task Force Orion, taking part in Operation Archer.

Terming the fighting as "pretty down and dirty", Michael says "on the ground, fighting can be pretty tough" as troops battle through enemy compounds that resemble mazes.

In one three-and-a-half week period, Michael remembers being in 36 major gun battles.

"It's not conventional warfare," Michael says of the fighting in Afghanistan. "You never know who the enemy is."

For seven and a half months, Michael "lived and fought" out of an LAV, and says the vehicle saved his life more than once.

"Fighting with the LAV is definitely a benefit with the range and

firepower it brings," Michael says.

Having come to realize the value of the LAV in the field, Michael says he gets a "great feeling of satisfaction" working with them at GDLS-C.

"I know firsthand these

LAVs saves the lives of the troops every single day," Michael says and the knowledge serves as incentive for Michael and his co-workers to make sure the LAVs passing through Page Street go back into the field in "as good a condition as they can be."

"Some of those LAVs might go back into the hands of friends of mine," Michael remembers. Michael still has many friends in the service, both in Edmonton and Afghanistan, who he keeps in touch with.

Whenever he hears of one of those friends going back into battle, he admits he's "always a bit nervous". In fact, when his former unit did another rotation in Afghanistan in 2008, Michael says he had a better understanding of what his loved ones went through when he fought there in 2006.

Sadly, Michael lost a friend during the 2008 rotation. His Section Commander, Sgt. Prescott Shipway, was killed by an IED (or roadside bomb) on September 17th. Michael and several of his friends gathered in Trenton for the repatriation of their fallen comrade.

Michael's own time in the PPCLI ended in April, 2007. With his daughter living in London, he wanted to get a posting in the city to be closer to her. Unable to, he left the Canadian Forces and made his way to the company. After working as a contract Security Officer for GDLS-C for six months, Michael was hired at GDLS-C on March 31st, 2008.

"I loved working with the LAVs in the army, and I still do," he says.

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Reminder To All Motorcycle Enthusiasts

The GDLS-C Ride for Charity (London to Turkey Point) is scheduled for Sunday, July 5th. \$25.00 registration includes lunch at The 2nd Sandbar Waterfront Eatery (and fantastic door prizes). Bring a passenger for \$15.00. Ride T-Shirts are on sale for \$10.00 each. Proceeds go to the Women's Community House in London. Hand in your registration forms to Patty Marshall (670-3999), Murdie Lafontaine (521-3876), Deno Lavdas (ext #5185) or Rob Thorpe (ext #5143).