

## Highlights from Pres. Tom's Comments at the GCC Annual General Meeting

- GCC on Zoom – maintaining the connection with the members
- Special Zoom Meeting in July 2021 to take an honest and realistic look where the GCC has been, where it is, and where we should be heading – good turnout, comments and suggestions.
- Calls to the members – most members but not all – happy to hear from the GCC, appreciated Zoom Meetings, and enjoyed the Newsletter.
- Regarding Covid, the sun will come out tomorrow.
- Special Christmas meeting, maybe a little corny, but shows that we can celebrate significant events together
- Website is now up and running and receiving favourable comments (Check it out at <https://gcclondon.ca>)
- Bursary Programme awarded 10 bursaries of \$1,000.00 each and three Special wards of \$250.00 each. (Need to receive a bursary to be eligible for a special award) These bursaries were made possible by the support of our two sponsors, General Dynamics Land Systems – Canada and Militex Coatings Inc. We thank these two London based companies for their support.
- HMCS Prevost arranged a virtual presentation for the five sailors who received GCC Bursaries. GCC members and sponsors were invited to this event.
- Honorary Memberships in the GCC were granted to General Dynamics Land Systems – Canada, represented by Andrea Browne and Militex Coatings Inc. represented by Andre Maas.
- Some matters were put on hold for the time being – new computer etc.
- The GCC Executive “has taken the initiative to keep the GCC alive and healthy in a pandemic.”
- Since the start of the pandemic, the GCC has added six (6) new members. (Jeff Topping, David Wyatt, Tobin Simcox, Matthew Wilson, Kevin Patterson, and most recently Eric Thomson)

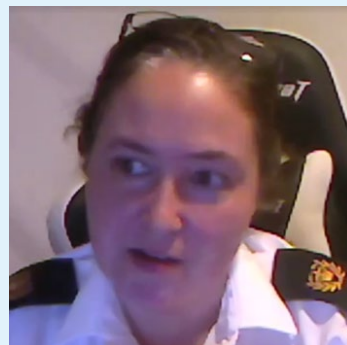
Continued on page 2

## Virtual Bursary Presentation HMCS Prevost

With five GCC Bursary Program awards going to members of HMCS Prevost, Cmd. Derek Niles and CPO Amy Rooney organized a virtual presentation of the Awards to their sailors on Zoom. Members of the GCC and sponsors were invited to attend and there was a good turnout.



Cmd. Derek Niles



CPO Amy Rooney



Andrea Brown General  
Dynamics Land Systems



Past President Geoff Hutton

The Garrison Community Council is pleased to offer Bursary Program Awards in aid of academic advancement of Reservists belonging to the eligible Units and Sub-Units of HMCS Prevost and 31 Canadian Brigade Group. Our thanks to our two sponsors General Dynamics Land Systems – Canada and Militex Coatings Inc.

## Go to page 2 for GCC Bursary Program Award Winners

### 2022 GCC Executive

President .....	Tom Dean
Past President .....	Geoff Hutton
Vice President .....	Mike Leatham
VP Communications ....	Kevin Patterson
Secretary .....	Randy Harden
Treasurer .....	John Martin

## Highlights from Pres. Tom's Comments

Continued from page 1

- Appreciation was expressed to the Executive which included: Past Pres. Geoff Hutton, VP Membership Mike Leatham, Acting VP Communications Kevin Patterson, Sec. Randy Harden, and Treas. John Martin for their extraordinary efforts on behalf of the GCC. They worked hard together as a team and did it all with a good sense of humour.
- For the future – we expect the GCC to become more of a task-oriented group rather than a titled group. “In other words, a member does not need to be a part of the Executive to be responsible for a specific programme or activity.” The GCC will rely on PP – Project Persons to get the work done and to add new activities. Every member is challenged to become a GCCPP!
- On a personal note, Pres. Tom indicated when he first agreed to become President, he had no idea that Covid was lurking in the background.
- Thanks was given to all members for their faith and support of the GCC. Faith and support are the keys to a bright future for the GCC.
- In agreeing to be nominated for President for an unprecedented third term, Pres. Tom stressed that he has no desire or aspiration to be President for Life

## Newsletter Contents

Highlights from Presidents Comments GCC AGM ...	Pages 1 - 2
Virtual Bursary Presentation HMCS Prevost .....	Page 1
Bursary Programme Award Winners .....	Page 2
GCC Bursary Programme Report .....	Page 3
GCC New Member .....	Page 3
GCC February Meeting and AGM.....	Page 3
Training New Recruits .....	Page 4
HMCS Prevost goes on deployment .....	Pages 5 & 6
Speakr for March Meeting .....	Page 6
GCC January Meeting .....	Page 7
Dues are due .....	Page 7
Message from Chief of Defence Staff .....	Pages 7 - 9
GCC Christmas and New Years Meeting .....	Page 10
31 CBG completes NOREX 22 .....	Page 11
Valour in the Presence of the Enemy .....	Pages 12 & 13
The Glue that Holds the Army Together .....	Page 13
Special Dispatch Riders .....	Pages 14 - 19

## Connections Editors

Tom Dean - President

Kevin Patterson - VP Communications

All GCC screenshots provided by Gary Nash.

## Bursary Program Award Winners

Made possible by the support of General Dynamics Land Systems - Canada and Militex Coatings Inc.



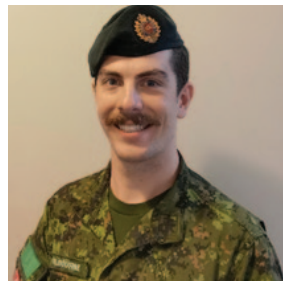
S2 Alvina Lin  
HMCS Prevost



S2 Andrew Malison  
HMCS Prevost



MCpl Cesar Barquero  
31 CBG



MCpl Chase Kilbourne  
31 CER  
(H) Col Tom Lawson Award



Pte Mason Wastell  
31 CER



A/Slt Musie Tsegay  
HMCS Prevost



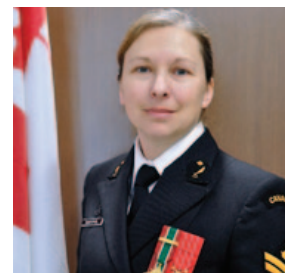
Pte (R) Rebecca Riddle  
4RCR  
Dr Don Bondy Award



Cpl Tarunveer Kohli  
1st Hussars



A/Slt Chengyu Guo  
HMCS Prevost  
Col (retd) Bill Pettipas Award



MS Shawna McNichol  
HMCS Prevost



## GCC BURSARY PROGRAMME REPORT

Submitted by Geoff Hutton - Past Pres. and Bursary Chair

**Start Date:** Mar 21, 2021

**Closing Date for Applications:** 22 Oct 21

**Funding Donors:** a. General Dynamics Land Systems - Canada - \$5,000  
b. Militex Coatings Inc. - \$5,000

**Funding Available for Bursaries:** Donors \$10,000

**Value of Bursaries:** \$1,000 each

**Value of Special Awards:** \$250 each (from GCC Budget)

**No of Awards:** 10 (+ 3 for Special Awards)

**Adjudicators:** Four Past-Presidents

**Winners:** HMCS Prevost - 5    31 CBG HQ - 1    1 Hussars - 1.  
4 RCR - 1                    31 CER - 2

**Notifications:** All winners and their COs were notified  
Cheques have been sent

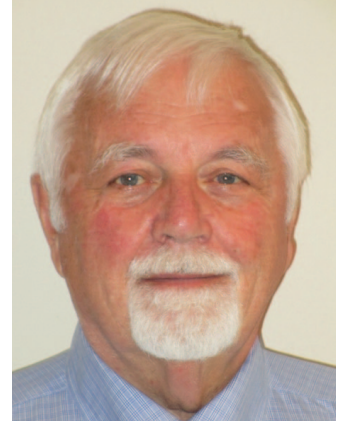
### Presentations:

Because of Covid, formal presentations were not feasible.  
Circumstances at HMCS Prevost enabled a limited  
Zoom presentation with GCC members and sponsors invited.

### Formal Report:

A formal bursary report for the 2021 Bursary Programme is held by the Secretary.

## GCC NEW MEMBER



Just recently, Eric Thomson was welcomed as a new member of the GCC. Eric is a retired Bell Canada employee with a distinguished record of community service.



## GCC February Meeting & AGM



### Guest Speaker: Andrew Rusk

Andrew is the co-founder of Not Left Behind, a national advocacy organization created in the summer of 2021 that successfully advocated for government action rescuing interpreters that supported Canada during the war in Afghanistan. His work and perspective has been featured on CBC The National, CTV National News, the Globe and Mail, the National Post, The Washington Post, and NPR, among others.

In addition to his work with Not Left Behind, Andrew is the co-founder of The Nichola Goddard Fund, Canada's leading fund focused on servicewomen and female Veterans, which he created to honour his sister-in-law who in 2006 was killed in Afghanistan.



## We're also training new recruits!

By Lt (N) Andrew McLaughlin, Public Affairs Officer,  
31 Canadian Brigade Group

Keeping the numbers up in the Brigade can be a challenge, especially with the impact of the global pandemic showing itself in scheduling interruptions and delays; just like we've all experienced.

Fortunately, 31 CBG Battle School has been able to continue Basic Training courses utilizing decentralized locations including London, Cambridge, Windsor and Hamilton as hubs.

We've also used training areas at Winona Range near Hamilton and Cedar Springs near Chatham, and recently, BMQ courses 0977/0979 conducted their navigation assessments at these locations.

Candidates confirmed their map and compass skills, and are now in the next phases of Basic Military Qualification (BMQ).

Watch for more from this course, which is nearing its FTX!

Photos: MCpl John McDonald, 31 CBG Battle School / Royal Highland Fusiliers of Canada



## Every Member should be a GCCPP (Garrison Community Council Project Person)





## MEMBERS OF HMCS PREVOST GO ON DEPLOYMENT

By: PO2 Emely Melendez Rodriguez, CD

Two weeks. Two weeks was all it took for best friends Master Sailor (MS) Hunter Johnson and MS Vanessa Rizzo to be selected and pack their bags to set off on a four-month long deployment aboard the Her Majesty's Canadian Ship (HMCS) Winnipeg on OPERATION (OP) NEON and OP PROJECTION. Beginning in August and ending in December, MS Johnson and Rizzo visited Alaska, Japan, Korea, the Philippines, and Hawaii in support of these operations. OP NEON is Canada's contribution to a coordinated, multinational effort between countries such as the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Germany and Holland to support the implementation of United Nations Security Council sanctions imposed against North Korea, while OP PROJECTION is Canada's ongoing commitment to worldwide peace.

Prior to departing, both Johnson and Rizzo were established members of HMCS Prevost with long records of service to the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) and to London. Johnson has served in various capacities around Prevost, including as Information Systems Administrator (ISA), Unit Public Affairs Representative (UPAR), and supporting Canada's response to the COVID-19 pandemic - OP LASER and OP VECTOR. For Rizzo's part, she has worked as a member of Prevost's full-time staff, offering regular and ongoing support to the ship's company's daily needs, while also supporting a growing family and completing an undergraduate degree in sociology.

Participating in OP NEON and PROJECTION was significantly important to both Johnson and Rizzo as they were two of only three reservists selected to augment a crew of 225 regular force members. Both were expected to operate at the level of their regular force counterparts, and were expected to operate the same equipment as them. Though Johnson and Rizzo were highly trained in their trades of Naval Communicator and Human Resources Administrator, both were still challenged to learn new platforms and operate equipment for the first time since their initial trade training. It is without a doubt that their regular training at HMCS Prevost assisted in their quick onboarding to this new platform.

Aside from having the opportunity to travel around the world in service of their country, part of the reason both enjoy their service as reservists in the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) is the flexible work opportunities it offers. Indeed, it was the ability to come from varied backgrounds and still be of service to Canada that motivated Rizzo to serve in the first place. "One thing I've always loved about the Naval Reserves is the flexibility I get in building my own career. Returning home with invaluable experiences and skills, and being able to use those skills in every other facet of my life."

Johnson, on the other hand, used the deployment as an opportunity to build her professional resume. Just weeks before departing, Johnson had finished a year-long contract for a civilian employer and was starting to feel the seas call her name following a previous deployment on Exercise Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) in 2018. In her own words, Johnson said: "since sailing on the [HMCS] Ottawa, I knew without a doubt I wanted to sail again [...] as well as to have an opportunity to brush up on my sailing skills".

*Continued on page 6*



## MEMBERS OF HMCS PREVOST GO ON DEPLOYMENT

*Continued from page 5*

Deemed one of the best confidence boosters of their professional lives given the deployment's opportunity for both Johnson and Rizzo to experience new cultures, make new friendships—and in Rizzo's case, sail for the first time ever—both OP NEON and OP PROJECTION cemented Johnson and Rizzo's commitments to the Navy because, as Johnson puts it: "This deployment was a huge boost in my confidence as an employee and as a junior manager. I am truly getting the best out of my experiences with the RCN". When asked if they would encourage other to take up the mantle of a deployment, Johnson said: "If you are a reservist considering taking up the challenge of augmenting the Regular Force, I'd highly encourage you to give it a shot. Jump right into sailing and see where it takes you! After all, you might end up in the middle of the ocean with one of the largest carrier strike groups since World War Two!"



## Speaker for March 9 GCC Meeting

Maj Cole McGregor

Regular Title: Deputy Commanding Officer, 429

Transport Squadron

Title during Op AEGIS: CC177 Detachment Commander, Operation AEGIS

Maj Cole McGregor is currently the Deputy Commanding Officer of 429 Transport Squadron at Canadian Forces Base Trenton, Ontario. During Operation (Op) AEGIS he was deployed to Ali Al Salem Air Base in Kuwait to lead Canada's CC177 Globemaster III assets during evacuation efforts in Kabul, Afghanistan. As the CC177 Detachment Commander, Maj McGregor oversaw the employment of three CC177 Globemaster III aircraft, five flying crews, and a team of ground personnel supporting maintenance and operational tasks. **As a pilot and Aircraft Commander, Maj McGregor personally evacuated 1,287 Afghan personnel and 193 United States Marines from Kabul during Op AEGIS.**

Maj McGregor has also served Canada as the Air Task Force Commander for Op BOXTOP, Canada's resupply mission to Canadian Forces Station Alert, and as an Aircraft Commander on various humanitarian missions including Op LENTUS. He has held staff positions at National Defence Headquarters in Ottawa and earned an MBA from the Royal Military College in Kingston Ontario.



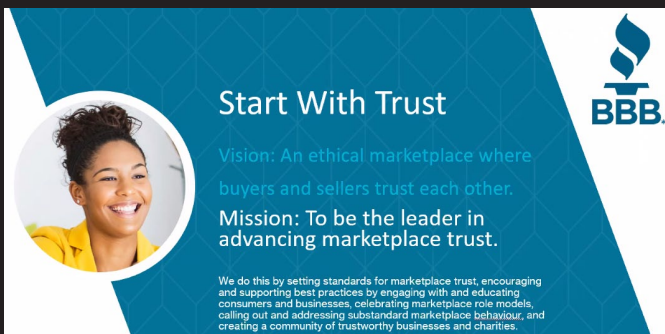


## GCC January Meeting



Jennifer Matthews

Jennifer is currently the CEO of Better Business Bureau Serving Western Ontario, located in London, Ontario. A graduate of the University of Waterloo (English Literature and Applied Studies), Jennifer spent 17 years establishing and growing a strong retail business in London before changing career paths to follow her passion for the arts. In 2019, she took on the role of Communications Manager at the Grand Theatre in London, until joining the BBB in July of 2021.



General Wayne Eyre

## MESSAGE from the Chief of the Defence Staff

To all members of the Canadian Armed Forces and wider Defence Team – Hello, Bonjour, Kwey.

This message is sent to you from the traditional unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinaabeg people, who have been stewards of these lands for millennia. I recognize that their culture and presence have nurtured and continue to nurture this territory to this day.

I was asked to continue to serve as Chief of the Defence Staff, and I have agreed to do so.

I take on this substantive role with my eyes wide open, knowing the rough road that lies ahead and the challenges that come with this position — particularly as we work to reconcile the troubling elements of the CAF's past and present, in order to build a better institution, all in the face of a deteriorating global security environment. *Continued on page 8*

## Dues are due

Yes, it is that time of year to support the Garrison Community Council by a prompt payment of your annual membership dues to our Secretary, Randy Harden.

Amount - \$100.00

Cheques are payable to Garrison Community Council or if you prefer an e-transfer can be made from you bank to:  
garrisoncommunitycouncil@gmail.com  
(Receipt provided if requested)

If paying by cheque please forward payment to:  
Garrison Community Council, London and Region  
PO Box 28065 Oakridge R.O.  
London, ON N6H 5E1

Note: If your cheque does not have your name on it, please attach a note identifying yourself. If your address, phone no. or email address has changed, let us know.



## MESSAGE

from the Chief of  
the Defence Staff

*Continued from page 7*

There will be no ceremony given the circumstances. We don't need one. Instead, we need to focus on the important work that lies ahead, for all of us. This appointment changes nothing in my approach.

Still, I wanted to take a moment to connect with you and to reaffirm my commitment to you – the incredible people who put on the uniform every day, and the many outstanding public servants who are part of the broader Defence Team family.

I am truly inspired by your selfless service to Canadians at home and around the world.

The world is more dangerous today than it has been at any other time since the Cold War. We continue to face a number of threats and challenges, both foreign and domestic. Both internal and external. To our country, there are those who seek to cause harm to us and to damage our institutions and their effectiveness.

The Canadian Armed Forces will continue to work with our allies and trusted international partners to counter aggression and destabilizing forces around the world – in Central and Eastern Europe, in the Indo-Pacific region, and in our own continental waters. Global crises, like the situation that unfolded in Afghanistan last summer, will continue to demand our attention – we must be ready.

Here at home, challenges such as climate change are altering the way we prepare for and conduct operations – and the type of operations we carry out. Hundreds of you are now supporting emergency flood relief efforts in British Columbia – at the end of a busy year in which many of you were deployed to help fight wildfires in B.C. and Manitoba, to support forest-fire evacuations in remote communities in Ontario and to mitigate flooding in Yukon.

And all this work has been done in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic – which we all know has not been kind to the CAF. We have all experienced the pandemic's negative impact on our personal lives and our operational readiness.

At the same time, we continue to grapple with a crisis of confidence in leadership emerging from a failure to evolve our internal culture.

This culture change is – along with continuing to deliver operationally, while rebuilding our readiness and modernizing the CAF – the core of reconstitution efforts that will drive our priorities going forward.

There are positive aspects of our culture – the desire for one to be part of something bigger, the willingness to put oneself into harm's way to protect others and the selflessness of putting aside one's own needs for the good of the country that we must retain and indeed celebrate.

It is the exclusionary aspects inherent in parts of our culture that we are addressing to ensure current and future members are safe, valued and able to focus on their most important task, protecting Canada and Canadians. We must retain, and be able to attract, talent from all segments of Canadian society. Canadians must see themselves in their armed forces – our future depends on it.

At the heart of everything we do is our people.

You are key to our operational effectiveness. And if we are to succeed as an organization – to be the military Canada needs and deserves – every member of the Canadian Armed Forces and broader Defence Team must feel welcomed, supported, empowered and inspired to bring their very best to the table each and every day.

I acknowledge that for many of you, this has not been your experience.

I recognize that our failure to adequately address misconduct within the CAF has resulted in significant harm to survivors, and eroded trust in the Chain of Command.

I also recognize the demoralizing effect that this is having on people at all levels of our organization.

We can, must, and will do better.

My promise to you is this: On my watch, we will approach this transformation of our culture with openness, humility, compassion and a determination to learn and improve. We must seek to improve our institution every day.

This is our challenge. This is our opportunity for a better, brighter future.

There will be mistakes and missteps along the way – that invariably comes with change. But moving forward is imperative. The status quo is not an option.

We all have a role to play, and we all must ensure our professional conduct aligns with the CAF's core values and principles – first and foremost, respect for the worth and dignity of every individual.

*Continued on page 9*



## MESSAGE from the Chief of the Defence Staff *Continued from page 8*

Those who choose not to — those who will not uphold these values and principles — have no place in our armed forces. I am deeply thankful to everyone working to effect real change, who offer their time, who continue to engage, and who have pushed for this change by helping us understand their diverse perspectives and lived experiences.

The last nine months have been difficult. They have been fraught with unrelenting operational demands, uncertainty and crises; making them some of the most challenging days of my career.

I have struggled to find balance, and there have been missteps as I pushed myself to listen, learn and consult broadly, before acting — sure of one thing, above all else: That I don't have all the answers.

But together, we will change the direction of this institution. We will not reach the end of this journey on my watch, but we have begun, and we will continue.

A life of service can be immensely rewarding — but it is never easy. Never easy on those of us who wear the uniform — and those who support us at home.

Our loved ones, families and families of choice know, feel and experience the stress that service to Canada can create. Many of you have spoken to me about the challenges of affordable housing for you and your families, stress compounded by rising cost of living and our operational tempo.

I know my own family has felt the stress and worry that comes with service — I know they often wondered if I would return from deployments, and if so if I would return whole and healthy.

To my own family: It is clear that my taking on this role adds to the burden you have borne over the years — but this is one more mission for us, and likely my final one. I thank you for your love and your own service to our country behind the scenes.

And to the outstanding people of the Canadian Armed Forces and broader Defence Team: Canada needs you now, more than ever.

As we confront these challenges, we must rise above the toxicity of our times and remember why we serve. We must always be there for Canada and Canadians.

As we challenge ourselves, as we struggle, learn and grow, I ask each of you to continue to do what so many of you do each and every day.

Take care of yourselves and continue to look out for one another.

Continue to carry out your duties to the very best of your abilities. Continue to defend Canada and Canadians. And continue to take well-deserved pride in your service. These will be sources of stability in times of great change. You are amongst the very best sailors, soldiers, aviators and public servants in the world.

Serve ethically, morally and professionally.

Serve with humility, an open heart and an open mind.

Serving alongside you — including now, as your Chief of the Defence Staff — is one of the greatest honours of my life.

For this, and for everything else you and your families sacrifice to keep the CAF strong and our country safe, you have my enduring gratitude.

Thank you. Merci. Miigwetch.

General Wayne Eyre  
Chief of the Defence Staff

This article was taken from the website of the Government of Canada, National Defence website at <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/maple-leaf/defence/2021/11/cds-message-defence-team.html>

Dated Nov. 25, 2021

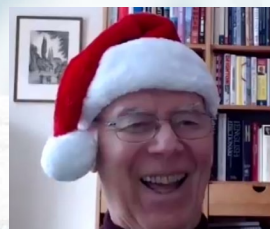


## Christmas and New Year's Zoom Meeting Wednesday, December 8th, 2021

Our special guests were from the Southwestern Ontario Military Family Resource Centre. Our speakers were Hardeep Sadra, the Executive Director and Rebeca Sousa, the Program Coordinator.



## Connecting to the Community





## 31 CBG completes NOREX 22

*By Lt (N) Andrew McLaughlin, Public Affairs Officer,  
31 Canadian Brigade Group*

Approximately 100 soldiers and 20 vehicles from the 4th Canadian Division's 31 Canadian Brigade Group conducted NOREX 22 at Canadian Forces Training Area Burwash and Garrison Petawawa from February 11-20, 2022.

NOREX is an annual exercise that confirms 4th Canadian Division Arctic Response Company Group (ARCG) readiness and capacity to respond to multiple contingencies in the most inhospitable terrain and weather conditions. The exercise focusses on responding to emergencies in Canadian communities like wild fires and floods, but also confirms conventional Infantry capabilities like navigation and weapons skills.

The specialized unit is led by the Grey and Simcoe Foresters, as they maintain the Division-level mission task responsible for Northern and Arctic operations. The unit is supplemented by soldiers from 31 CBG units from across Southwestern Ontario, including many from London-based units.

As a unique Canadian Army Infantry unit, the ARCG stands ready to respond to a host of mission sets, and maintains its capacity to fight, move and communicate in challenging terrain with specialized kit and vehicles, in the coldest temperatures.

Images by Avr Lanny Jellicoe,  
Garrison Petawawa Garrison Petawawa Base Imaging



Images by  
Bdr Julia Currie, 31 CBG Public Affairs



## Valour in the Presence of the Enemy

January 10, 2022

By Michael Blais CD

**Canadians acknowledge military** valour with three potential decorations. Candidates for the Medal of Military Valour are chosen due to “an act of valor or devotion to duty in the presence of the enemy.” The Star of Military Valor, second on the tier, would be awarded “for distinguished and valiant service in the presence of the enemy”. The Victoria Cross, the supreme level of recognition, is awarded for “the most conspicuous bravery, a daring or preeminent act of valor or self sacrifice or extreme devotion to duty in the presence of the enemy.”

In the presence of the enemy is the central theme. To date, ninety nine Canadians have been awarded the traditional Victoria Cross. None have been deemed worthy since the Conservative government created the Canadian Victoria Cross in 2008. That was at a time of our nation’s history when Canada was sustaining casualties in Afghanistan at a rate unseen since the Korean War. The political theatrics surrounding the public announcement led to high expectations from Canadians that the 100th recipient of the V.C and thereby also the first Canadian Victoria Cross would be determined during the course of the war in Afghanistan. However, the Conservatives deemed that the requisite levels of “conspicuous acts of valour” were not met and thus rendered the Canadian VC a headline without substance. While the war in Afghanistan may have not concluded as many Canadian pundits envisioned, this should not detract from the fact that several Canadian soldiers selflessly performed incredible acts of bravery, courage and self sacrifice, wherein the heroic acts of one individual saved the lives of many.

The Afghanistan War is over, the government of that era has been replaced and past excuses pertaining to VC deferment under the guise that another, greater act of glory could yet be committed, are as lame as the treatment our war wounded received from VAC when returning from Afghanistan. Fortunately, many of the adverse issues affecting the health and well being of Canada’s war traumatized have been redressed by the current Liberal government. While there continues to be contentious issues in respect to expedient adjudication, service delivery and competent staffing levels, there have been important policy changes which have improved the quality of life of our Afghan veterans who were adversely affected by the deeply reviled New Veterans Charter.

The time now has come for the Liberal government to redress the political failure thus far to award the Canadian Victoria Cross. It is time for the veterans’ community to rally behind the efforts of General (ret’d) Rick Hillier and the non profit

organization Valour in the Presence of the Enemy. This initiative is supported by every former Task Force Commander who led troops in the Afghanistan war. These former officers have taken the lead, conducting due diligence research on each of the recipients of the Star of Valour citations to determine who, if anyone, fulfilled the criteria to warrant the Victoria Cross. As a result, they have selected Private Jess LaRoche, First Battalion, The Royal Canadian Regiment and they are now advocating that the government review Private LaRoche’s Star of Military Valour citation. Their intent is to include new information that would fulfill the necessary prerequisites for the Victoria Cross. Subsequently this would result in the awarding of the medal to Private LaRoche through royal decree.

### **Private Jess LaRoche, First Battalion, The Royal Canadian Regiment**

On October 14, 2006, Private LaRoche of the 1st Royal Canadian Regiment Battle Group was manning an observation post when it was destroyed by an enemy rocket in Pashmul, Afghanistan. Although he was alone, severely injured, and under sustained enemy fire in his exposed position at the ruined observation post, he aggressively provided covering fire over the otherwise undefended flank of his company’s position. While two members of the personnel were killed and three others were wounded in the initial attack, Private LaRoche’s heroic actions permitted the remainder of the company to defend their battle positions and to successfully fend off the sustained attack of more than 20 insurgents. His valiant conduct saved the lives of many members of his company.

What is not mentioned in the citation is some vital information which elevates the case for awarding LaRoche the Victoria Cross. LaRoche’s injuries from the rocket attack were substantial; his back was broken, one of his eyes was blinded through a detached retina, he was deafened in his right ear, and he was briefly concussed. When he regained consciousness, he was confronted with a scene from hell. Two of his regimental brothers were lying dead beside him. three were seriously wounded. The Observation Post (OP) was under sustained attack by over twenty insurgents. He discovered the GPMG he had been manning had been destroyed. Further compounding the situation, the platoon LAVs delegated to provide Fire support for the unit’s flank and the OP were both non serviceable due to weapon stoppages. LaRoche was alone, seriously wounded, half blind, half deaf, yet he chose to fight. He gathered the OP’s 15 M72’s,

*Continued on page 13*



## Valour in the Presence of the Enemy

*Continued from page 12*

exposed himself repeatedly to enemy fire while engaging the advancing insurgents with rocket fire so effective the enemy attackers were forced to withdraw. Also noteworthy that Larochelle's section was short-handed at the time of the attack. He had volunteered to man the OP and after the attack, he remained on the field of battle for twelve hours despite his injuries. He only reported to the medics after he was returned to Kandahar Airfield. After brief medical treatment, he volunteered to carry one of his fallen comrades during the ramp ceremony. Two years later, shrapnel was still egressing from his skin. Ultimately, Private Larochelle's injuries were deemed career ending. The physical and mental consequences of his acts of heroism resulted in a medical release.

**Is this the definition of Victoria Cross recipient? I believe so.**

If you concur, you can help. You can be part of the solution by engaging your MP and the Prime Minister of Canada on two levels. We must understand this will be a political decision and if we are to prevail in this noble effort, we must collectively win the hearts and minds of the Prime Minister and the parliament of Canada. We must all do our part in outreach and awareness.

Once you've sent your emails, reach out to friends and family to encourage them to be force multipliers by adding their correspondence.

Finally, add your name to the parliamentary petition -E3636-Valour in the Face of the Enemy, where over 11000 Canadians have already signed. Every name counts, so let us rally to the patriot call and unite under General Hillier's leadership to collectively fight to ensure Private Jess Larochelle, 1RCR is recognized as the first recipient of the Canadian Victoria Cross.

<https://petitions.ourcommons.ca/en/Petition/Details?Petition=e-3636>

This article is reproduced with the permission of espritdecorps.



**espritdecorps**  
CANADIAN MILITARY MAGAZINE

## The Glue that Holds the Army Together

LtN Andrew McLaughlin, PAO 31CBG

It's an old military saying that NCOs are "the glue that holds the Army together."

Anyone with military experience knows the axiom to be true, and developing the next generation of Non-Commissioned Officers is a priority for the Canadian Army.

As a leader in this effort, 31 CBG Battle School (31 BSL) is currently training Sergeants on Rifle Section Commander Course 0074, which runs into Spring.

"This year's course is based upon our experience with other completed, highly successful serials where we qualified dozens of new Rifle Section Commanders," says LCol Peter St Denis, Commanding Officer of 31 BSL.

During the first weekend of the course, candidates conducted "walk-through/talk-throughs" (rehearsals) of Section SOPs at 4th Canadian Division Training Centre in Meaford. This was in preparation for a series of field exercises that will be conducted over the March Break and beyond.

Follow along on social media for more!

Image by:

WO Justin Chaston, 31 CBG Battle School / Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada (Princess Louise's)



## SPECIAL DISPATCH RIDERS – URGENT MAPS AND MESSAGES – “GET THE MESSAGE THROUGH”

By HCol Ken Lloyd, 32 Signal Regiment

Dispatch riders (or despatch riders, as we used the British spelling during WWII) were military messengers delivering important information and equipment that could not be sent through electronic or digital means. While dispatch riders were phased out after the Second World War, the skill is being reintroduced for Signal Operators today. How different is being a Dispatch Rider today with more than 70 years ago? How do the skills compare with those in WWII? We ask Despatch Rider Cpl Hugh Patterson, a 100-year-old WWII veteran, and Cpl Kurt Rajala, Special Dispatch Rider currently serving with 32 Signal Regiment.



In World War II, Despatch Riders (DRs) like Cpl Hugh Patterson rode Norton 16H motorcycles from the D-Day beaches, through France, Holland, and into Germany. The DR rode alone, delivering maps, orders, intelligence, and situational updates critical to the battle. Hugh Patterson was one of 7 Despatch Riders from his Section of 24 who survived enemy fire, shelling, and neck level garrotting wires set across dark roads. Often, reacting to enemy fire, ‘off-roading’ was a DR survival skill. The Norton was a favoured Despatch bike, with its high ground clearance and its ability to survive being ‘ditched’ when diving for cover, riding between trees, or hauled through mud. Special skills are needed to be a Dispatch Rider and those skills are now being taught again.



In WWII the vehicles of choice were the motorcycle or the Jeep. Today, in Petawawa, the chosen vehicle is the ATV.



**Cpl Hugh B. Patterson**

a Veteran Signaller and Despatch Rider in WWII. Active service # B38779 July 1942 to January 1946 with 2nd Canadian Infantry Division Royal Canadian Corps of Signals.



**Cpl Kurt Rayala**

is a Signal Operator with 32 Signal Regiment, he attended an SDR course (Special Dispatch Rider) with 2 CMBG HQ & Sigs Sqn in Petawawa. The course was run by 2 CMBG HQ & Sigs to meet its own needs for qualified SDRs. Cpl Rayala joined the Canadian Armed Forces Primary Reserve in 2018 and has served in Signals for 3 years. Cpl Rayala completed the ATV and SDR training with 2 CMBG HQ & Sig course in August 2021.

*Continued on page 15*



## SPECIAL DISPATCH RIDERS *Continued from page 14*

Ten questions were shared with our Despatch Riders. WWII Cpl Patterson's answers are followed by present day Cpl Rayala's answers.

### Cpl Patterson

*Q1. What is the role of a DR?*

I was a despatch rider in WWII. My role was to deliver communications, orders, maps, messages, and mail to all the field formations in the 2nd Canadian Division. There were two daily despatch runs and occasionally, a special despatch if it was required. I also took turns working in the Signals Office as a clerk: processing messages, sorting, and stamping mail. The field formations in 2nd Canadian Division included: 4th, 5th and 6th Infantry Brigades, 2nd Anti-tank Brigade, 3rd Light Anti-Aircraft, Engineering Company, 8th RECCE Regiment, Medium Artillery, and Heavy Artillery. I made my despatch runs on a motorcycle and sometimes in a Jeep depending on the situation and what was available at the time.

### Cpl Rayala

*Q1. What is the role of the SDR?*

Special Dispatch Riders provide courier service in the battlespace by delivering sensitive information in a swift and secure manner. Navigating offroad terrain and under the threat of enemy contact, SDRs ensure the passage of information to enable senior commanders to exercise command and control.

### Cpl Patterson

*Q2. What purpose did DRs serve in the Army given the use of radios and telephones that send information much more quickly and securely than a despatch rider?*

During WWII, radios and telephone lines were not always secure or dependable. Telephone lines and cables could be cut. Radios were finicky and you didn't always get a clear signal. We didn't have the use of satellites or the sophisticated tech that is available today. DRs would get the messages through no matter what, they went and delivered vital despatches as quickly as possible. There were often bulky orders, maps, and other items that had to be delivered.

### Cpl Rayala

*Q2. What purpose do SDRs serve in the 21st century given the use of sophisticated communication and information systems that send information much more quickly and securely than a dispatch rider?*

While modern communication and information systems can send information more efficiently than an SDR, these

technologies do have limitations. SDRs fill these gaps by fulfilling the "last mile" in the command and control network by delivering information where voice and data technologies are not able to do so. This can be in the delivery of something that can't be sent via voice or data technologies like a physical map. SDRs can also be dispatched where environmental factors such as terrain and weather limit the use of voice and data systems. However, electronic warfare probably serves as the greatest reason to have SDRs in the 21st century. Whether by electronic countermeasures imposed by the enemy through jamming, or through electronic protection measures such as emission control and electronic silence, voice and data systems can be made unavailable to send information. As such, SDRs would enable continuity of the flow of information that otherwise could not be sent.

### Cpl Patterson

*Q3. How versatile were motorbikes and Jeeps for this role?*

Motorbikes were sometimes more versatile because you could get around craters, shell holes in the road, or climb up hills and difficult terrain. You could hoist it into a ditch and avoid mortar fire. Jeeps were good vehicles for the role because you could travel greater distances. Some despatches required that I travel more than a hundred miles if I was sent to HQ. Other times, the distances were short, less than 20 or 30 km, if sent to field units. I believe the ATV, currently used by SDRs, would have a shorter range for travel, limited to formations close by, not meant for long distance.



### Cpl Rayala

*Q3. How versatile is the ATV for this role?*

An ATV is a very versatile vehicle that allows an SDR to accomplish his or her objective in delivering information in the battlespace. Since soldiers operate in virtually any environment, SDRs require a vehicle that can go where

*Continued on page 16*

## SPECIAL DISPATCH RIDERS *Continued from page 15*

the soldiers are. With 4-wheel drive and a locking differential, the ATV I drove was capable of traversing through the various adverse terrain I drove through, such as steep sandy inclines as well as muddy and partially submerged paths. However, one limitation I noted with the ATV is that since it is a wider vehicle, it is not particularly suitable for driving in between trees. During my ATV driver training, the path ahead of us was too submerged to traverse through. So, we circumnavigated it by driving around it, through the tree line beside the path. We had to choose our path carefully in order to pass between trees. On a dispatch mission, an SDR would be more limited in the areas he or she can traverse.



### Cpl Patterson

*Q4. What was your training like? (Classroom and Field portions)*

I did my first military training in Orillia, July 1942, Basic training. In September 1942, I did Advanced Signals training at Vimy Barracks, Kingston, ON. In the classroom, we reviewed a range of Signals communications. Wireless radios, Morse Code, and motorcycle riding for DR/SDR (Despatch Rider / Special Despatch Rider).

The field portion of my DR course was made up of riding motorcycles all over the countryside. We practised hill climbing and blackout riding, no headlights. We also studied map reading and the use of a compass for navigation.

The classroom portion of my training included military protocols, procedures, safety and security measures. In December 1942, I was deployed to Europe and was sent to Cove Hampshire. This was a Signals holding unit. I continued some training here in January 1943. In 1944, closer to D Day, I participated in several military schemes. DRs took turns directing the Convoy. We delivered despatches daily.

### Cpl Rayala

*Q4. What was your training like?*

My training consisted of 1 week of an ATV Driver Wheel course and 2 weeks of the Special Dispatch Rider course.

During the ATV driver course, I learned about basic maintenance of the ATV, inspecting the serviceability of the ATV, and learning how to drive the ATV to include various offroad surfaces and terrain as well as during daytime and nighttime lighting.

The SDR course was split between 1 week of in class learning, followed by a 1 week field portion. For the classroom portion, I learned about ensuring the security of the information we would deliver such as how to package sensitive information as well as policies and procedures. There was also a lesson related to operating in a battlefield such as IED awareness, and forward and rearward passage of lines. Finally, there was extensive learning on battle procedure and navigation to enable us to conduct a Dispatch mission.

For the field portion, there was a dismounted map and compass navigation followed by a vehicle GPS navigation – both conducted during daytime and nighttime. Afterward, we had practice dispatch missions and concluded with assessments in our ability to successfully conduct a dispatch mission.

### Cpl Patterson

*Q5. Did you learn about maintenance?*

Our DR training included some basic maintenance of our bikes, but there were “Fitters” (mechanics available to service bikes when needed).



### Cpl Rayala

*Q5. Did you learn about maintenance?*

I only learned basic maintenance of the ATV. This included inspecting vehicle serviceability and checking the fluid levels. I did not learn more advanced level of maintenance on the ATV.

*Continued on page 17*



## SPECIAL DISPATCH RIDERS *Continued from page 16*

### Cpl Patterson

*Q6. What do you think about being a DR?*

I enjoyed exploring the roads and the countryside. I enjoyed riding a motorcycle. As long as you were not in a battle zone or under fire, it was a great job. It was my job to deliver dispatches safely and quickly. I did my job.

### Cpl Rayala

*Q6. What do you think about being an SDR?*

I think it is a unique experience to train as an SDR. In my limited experience in military and the signals world, I would sometimes hear about SDRs and what they do, but it was nothing more than discussion. So, to have the opportunity to learn and experience the role of an SDR is exciting. It is also an honour to follow and continue the legacy of SDRs of the past who played an important role in the success of the Canadian Army in the World Wars.

### Cpl Patterson

*Q7. What was the best part and the worst part of your role as DR?*

The best part was seeing so many countries in Europe, so many places. The worst part was experiencing shellfire and mortar fire and artillery barrages. You had to seek cover, look for a ditch or a fox hole. If caught, you had to burn the despatches. Luckily, that didn't happen to me. Delivering despatches at night was also challenging.

### Cpl Rayala

*Q7. What was the best bit/ worst bit?*

I would say the best part of the training was the offroad driving on the ATV. It was exciting to experience driving across different terrain, especially the more adverse terrain like steep muddy inclines and bumpy and uneven paths. The worst part was the dismounted land navigation portion of the course, specifically at night. Using only a map and compass, I had to navigate to various points. The darkness made it especially difficult to navigate to the points.

### Cpl Patterson

*Q8. When and where did you do your course?*

Basic Training in Orillia, Ontario, (July and August, 1942), Advanced Training, Vimy Barracks, Kingston, (September to December, 1942). Deployed to Europe: December 1942 Cove Hampshire, England, Signals Holding Unit, (1942/43). I proceeded to Dover, England, June 1944. Following D Day, 2nd Canadian Infantry Division landed in Normandy. I followed the 2nd Division through France, Belgium, Holland, and Germany. I was in Oldenburg, Germany on VE Day. I returned to Canada in December 1945.



### Cpl Rayala

*Q8. When and where did you do your course?*

I took this training opportunity during August of 2021 in CFB Petawawa. The courses (ATV/SDR courses) were delivered by 2 CMBG HQ & Sigs Sqn.

### Cpl Patterson

*Q9. What differences did you notice between SDRs from your experience?*

From my experience, DRs in WWII did not have the technology that is available today. We had excellent maps which we carried in a map case with a plastic cover. We did not use radios during despatch runs. We relied on our maps to get us there. Sometimes, the units were not exactly where indicated on the map. That is because units were constantly on the move as the war progressed.

### Cpl Rayala

*Q9. What differences did you notice between SDRs from WWI and WWII compared to today?*

The main difference I noticed between SDRs of today compared to SDRs of the past is the use of technology in performing the job. The big advantage that I had while training was the use of a GPS receiver to determine exactly where I was. With a click of a button, I could see my coordinates and plot them on my map to figure out where I was in case I was off my route and needed to navigate back on course. I also was able to input waypoints into the receiver which provided me with the exact bearing and distance to my rendezvous point. SDRs during the World Wars did not have this technology to aid them in navigating to their destinations. They had to rely on a map and compass to navigate to their objective. Furthermore, I had the benefit of having a radio to communicate with the command post to convey information during my dispatch mission. With the radio, I was able to communicate my progress along my route, confirm the delivery of the information to the recipient, report enemy contact, and so forth. Radio communications enable modern SDRs and the command post to keep in contact. However, SDRs in the past were not issued radio.

*Continued on page 18*

## SPECIAL DISPATCH RIDERS *Continued from page 17*

Consequently, the dispatching authority wouldn't know if the information was delivered until the dispatch rider returned and confirmed its delivery.



### Cpl Patterson

*Q10. How did you conduct your Despatch missions?*

Despatch runs were posted daily and DRs would check the postings. There were two despatch runs per day, normally. You would report to pick up despatches. The despatches were in a case or despatch bag which slung over your shoulder. We had our orders and list of destinations to deliver despatches. We might have a run to several field units that were nearby or we might have a run to Headquarters, more than a hundred miles away. So we rode a motorcycle or drove a Jeep, depending on what was available or what the situation demanded. Occasionally we could travel in pairs, but most often, we travelled alone. It was our mission to deliver despatches as quickly and safely as possible. We completed our mission, then returned to our unit. We wore a blue and white armband to show that we were on official Army business. We could go anywhere without question. We had important despatches to deliver.

### Cpl Rayala

*Q10. How did you conduct your Despatch missions?*

Lastly, the other aspect I noticed with my SDR training compared to the past is in how we conduct dispatch missions. While SDRs of the past drove alone to deliver what they had, the SOPs (standard operating procedures) that I trained on was to deploy in pairs. On our dispatch missions, we would go out in twos, with one person as the leader and the other one as the signaller. However, I notice that dispatch riders of the past deploy by themselves. This made the role significantly more dangerous since the dispatch rider had only themselves to rely on to accomplish their delivery.

### "The Message Must Get Through"

on the modern battlefield, although not all messages can be transmitted digitally. Documents, code books, and messages must still be delivered safely and securely by special dispatch. Thanks to the Signallers like Cpl Patterson and Cpl Rayala, the Canadian Signals Dispatch Service continues to build on its well-deserved reputation.

What was it like being a DR? In the words of Cpl Hugh Patterson, pictured right, 100 years old and a 2nd Canadian Division Despatch Rider.

"We wore a blue and white armband...we could go anywhere without question... we had important despatches to deliver."



Special Thanks to Theresa Campbell, Hugh Patterson's daughter, who generously offered to ask her 100-year old father 10 questions about his time as a WWII Despatch Rider. Cpl Desiree Cardenas of 32 Signal Regiment shared the same questions with Cpl Kurt Rayala who had recently completed Special Dispatch Rider training.

---

## Last Words

We'd like to extend our thanks and appreciation to everyone who contributed to this latest version of the GCC newsletter. Our goal is to further GCC's Mission to build a greater understanding, support and appreciation of Canada's military.