



GUELPH MERCURY

Spared from subway terror

Appointment change kept Guelph grad away from London bombing

BY THANA DHARMARAJAH
MERCURY STAFF

GUELPH

It was pure luck that saved Kevin McDermott from being one of the bloodied victims in the morning rush-hour blasts that ripped through London's subway system yesterday, killing at least 37 people and leaving about 700 wounded.

The University of Guelph graduate, who is working as a

software developer in London, narrowly missed being at Edgware Road tube station yesterday around 9 a.m. when a bomb exploded.

Fortunately, he had rescheduled a meeting that would have put him in the subway at that time.

"Circumstances made it happen," said the 26-year-old, speaking from his home in London yesterday evening.

His wife Laura, also a

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University of Guelph graduate, added that "luckily he changed his mind."

The explosions hit three

subway stations and a double-decker bus in rapid succession around 9 a.m. local time in London.

The incident brought the city's transportation system to a halt as authorities immediately shut down the subway and bus lines that log 8.4 million passenger trips every weekday.

"It was complete shock and horror," said Laura, 26, who took the tube to work yesterday

morning and managed to arrive at work safely.

People were filing into the streets, walking to get to work or trying to catch alternate transportation.

Transit staff was handing out flyers so Londoners would know which buses were running.

"They were quite prepared for it," the social worker said.

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University of Guelph graduates Kevin McDermott and his wife Laura are in London, England.

Gas-line leak clears homes

Pets more important than clothes during an evacuation downtown

BY BRIAN WHITWHAM
MERCURY STAFF

GUELPH

Matthew Keeley never expected to spend yesterday morning half-naked on a city bus with two cats and a hamster named Boo.

"It's better than being half-naked in the street," the University of Guelph student said. "I already did that."

"Today was supposed to be a quiet day. I guess it's not."

The 30-year-old was one of about 80 people who evacuated their houses or businesses around 8:45 a.m. after a gas line burst across the road from Keeley's Cork Street home.

He left his house shirtless and barefoot and walked down the street with his three pets, leaving a trail of shavings from the hamster's cage as he walked.

"I'm sure I could have dallied around longer but I wasn't going to take any chances," he said. "My priorities were me and the animals and that's it."

David Sharpe, a platoon chief with the Guelph fire department, said the gas line appeared to be broken by a hydraulic excavator, a construction vehicle with a huge shovel, on the demolition site of the old Bishop Macdonell high school.

"It was quite noisy and there was a lot of dust and dirt being kicked up," Sharpe said, adding

there was a strong scent of gas hanging in the air.

The fire department evacuated all of the houses along Cork Street between Norfolk Street and Dublin Street, as well as Dublin north to Paisley Street. Even the plaza at the corner of Paisley and Norfolk was shut down.

"My priorities were me and the animals and that's it"

MATTHEW KEELEY
EVACUATED RESIDENT

Sharpe said emergency personnel have to take gas leaks seriously. "They are a fire hazard and the gas will displace oxygen, so if you're in a small contained area, it can ... make it hard to breathe."

Keeley was roused by the racket made by the gas spraying from the fractured line, but he said he stayed in bed, figuring it was the usual rumble of construction.

Moments later, firefighters were pounding on his door and telling him to leave, he said. Standing on one of the buses provided by Guelph Transit for temporary shelter, Keeley had his pets stacked next to him in their cages.

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Sarah Lawson, left, and Natasha Mann get assistance from Guelph firefighters who went door-to-door on Cork Street yesterday to get people out of their homes after a gas line was ruptured.



Tarrah Doherty, 25, listens during a summer school session at St. James high school in Guelph.

Back to the classroom

25-year-old is working on her high school diploma

BY MATTHEW CHUNG
MERCURY STAFF

GUELPH

Tarrah Doherty was 16 and had just learned she was pregnant when she last sat in a classroom.

She dropped out soon after. Now 25, she returned to the classroom Wednesday surrounded by teenagers starting summer school.

She's studying Grade 11 biology this summer as she works toward her high school diploma so she can study midwifery at the post-secondary level.

"It's very different to be back," the Guelph mother of three said. "But I want to be able to provide for my family and to set an example for them."

"If (her children) ever try to drop out, I'll say 'no way, look what I did.'"

More than 1,100 students from the Upper Grand and Wellington Catholic school boards sauntered about the

halls of St. James Catholic high school on Victoria Road, shouting greetings to familiar faces and casting weary glances at the teachers who will instruct them for the next two to four weeks.

Summer school gives students a chance to catch up on a failed or missed course and improve their marks. Classes last five and a half hours each day including two 15 minute breaks.

But not all of the students are as eager as Doherty to be there.

"It pretty much sucks, because there's no summer," 15-year-old April Burns said. She is making up for a failing grade in a Grade 10 science course and will be in summer school for 10 days.

Her friend Brittany Todorowski, also 15, agrees.

"I was supposed to be in Ottawa with my family," she said.

Karen Burgess, who is teaching Grade 11 biology this summer, said a student's level of

concentration in the summer tends to depend on what grade they're in.

She said students in Grades 9 and 10 struggle to stay focused for five hours on one subject, where Grade 11 and 12 students tend to be more driven.

"Or they really don't like school" and want to fast-track through their courses, she added.

Peter Bolton, who is teaching Grade 10 math, has a different perception of his students.

He said he finds, on average, the students are more receptive in the summer than during the regular school year because they can focus on just one subject and they don't have the same distractions — team sports and friends — as during the regular school year.

And they're anxious to get their credit.

"They tend not to want to waste the month," he said.

"They figure, 'why give up their summer (for nothing)?"

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