

3rd Battalion, the Rifles

It is with sadness that the Ministry of Defence must confirm that Corporal Lee Brownson a from 3rd Battalion, the Rifles was killed in Afghanistan on 15 January 2010. He was killed as a result of an IED explosion while on patrol near Sangin, in Helmand Province.

Corporal Lee Brownson was born in Bishop Auckland on 15 September 1979. He went to King James the First Comprehensive School prior to enlisting in the Army on 30 August 1996.

He attended phase one training at the Army Training Regiment in Winchester before attending the Infantry Training Centre Catterick in November 1996. He completed training and was posted to the Second Battalion, the Light Infantry based at the time in Palace Barracks, Northern Ireland.

During his time in the army Corporal Brownson has served in Sierra Leone, Cyprus, Iraq, Kosovo and Afghanistan. He completed the Platoon Serjeants Battle Course in Brecon in March 2009 gaining the highest possible grade. Corporal Brownson assumed the role of section commander with 2 Platoon, A Company 3 RIFLES and it was in this role that he deployed on Op HERRICK 11.

He leaves behind his wife Leeanne, two daughters Ginalee and Morgan and his unborn child.

Lieutenant Colonel Nick Kitson, Commanding Officer 3 RIFLES BG said:

"Corporal Lee Brownson was the very best of Riflemen, brimming with energy, cheer, modesty and resourcefulness. Such was his self confidence and inner strength that nothing was too much trouble for him in understanding and caring for the needs of those around him. Whether for his beloved wife and daughters at home or for his brothers in arms here in Afghanistan, his first priority was to take care of others.

"His loss leaves a gaping hole but we shall close ranks and continue the fight, a fight at the forefront of which he was always to be found. We honour his brave sacrifice, saluting his commitment and example.

"He played a massive part in our work out here, proving himself in combat on countless occasions and giving untold strength to his men through tough times. With spirit and compassion in equally copious measure, he was a beacon of inspiration to us all.

"He was a leader in every sense; commanding the respect not only of those who worked for him, but also of those for whom he worked. Representing the bright future of the army and his loss is a heavy burden to bear.

"There will be no shortage of Riflemen willing to share stories of his life with his children in the

years to come. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family. We know that they will draw strength, as do we, from the finest of examples he set in life."

Major Tim Harris, Officer Commanding A Company said:

"Corporal Brownson was truly phenomenal. He was loved by his men: they all wanted to be just like him, their hero. He was kind and caring, taking new arrivals under his wing and giving them courage during the darkest of hours.

"He was outstandingly brave: if there was a fight to be had he was always at the front. On one occasion, like the all-action hero he was, he was hit by a piece of shrapnel in his shoulder, but refused medical treatment, dealing with it in the morning once the enemy had gone.

"What I loved most about 'Brownny' was the mischievous twinkle in his eyes: I always suspected he was up to something but like all the best loveable rogues I could never quite pin anything on him. He was a consummate professional, as proved by his award of a distinction on the elite Platoon Serjeants' Battle Course: he was ready for promotion and I am convinced that he could have done the Platoon Serjeant job standing on his head.

"I spoke to him about his career the day before he died and I am so grateful that I got the chance. We discussed his hopes, fears and ambitions. I got the chance to thank him for his exemplary bravery during a previous attack at Patrol Base Almas, and for his fortitude which helped see his Platoon through the hardest of times.

"The Battalion has lost a fine soldier, a compassionate human being, a cheeky chap and a dear friend. But our pain can be nothing when compared to the loss felt by his beloved Leeanne, Ginalee and Morgan. Our thoughts and prayers are with them and his wider family at this time.

"Corporal Brownson's legacy is the clutch of young Riflemen who continue to endeavour to complete the task set before us: they have learned from the best and they – we - will not let you down. 'Stand easy' Brownny."

Lieutenant Palmer Winstanley, Officer Commanding 2 Platoon said:

"Words cannot begin to tell you what kind of a man Corporal Lee Brownson was. One of the most inspiring men I have had the honour of serving with. He was relaxed but efficient, friendly but ruthless when needed, but his best asset was his ability to inspire all those around him to do better. His men looked up to him for leadership, friendship and inspiration.

"He loved his job. He would sit for hours coming up with 'out of the box' plans to catch the insurgents out. He applied 100% of his energy to serving his men. I will never forget his bravery when a sentry position collapsed during a battle with the insurgents.

"The two lads in the sentry position were buried outside the compound, so without thinking twice for his own safety, Brownny leapt out of the base without his helmet and body armour under heavy enemy fire (from only 100m away) to recover the two men to safety. He was a truly brave and compassionate man.

"While he loved his job, this only accounted for 1% of his life. Another 1% was spent dreaming up yet more fantastic money making schemes. The majority of his life, however, was spent talking about his childhood sweetheart and wife, Lianne, his two beautiful daughters Ginalee and Morgan, and his unborn baby due this summer. Our thoughts and prayers are with them at this terrible time.

"Brownny, you were an incredible commander and friend; you were and always will be, one of a kind, with enough character to carry the whole Platoon. You will be truly missed, a gap that can never be filled, but you leave memories that will always remain."

Colour Serjeant 'Suggs' Sugrue, acting Company Serjeant Major, A Company said:

"I first met Brownny just short of two years ago in Kosovo when I first came to this Battalion, and I enjoyed many hours of banter with him about which was the better regiment – The Green Jackets or The Light Infantry. The more I got to know him, the more it became apparent that he was a true Rifleman in every sense of the word, he was keen and loved what he did for a living, this showed in the way he performed his duties.

"His selfless commitment to his lads and his platoon was awe inspiring, the word 'no' was not part of his vocabulary, and he was always willing to lend a hand to any one who asked, and I did many times. He was a truly respected and loved member of the Company who epitomised all that you could wish to achieve as Rifleman.

"He leaves a big gap in A Company, which will be hard to fill. Brownny's love for his job was only second to that of the love for his family, and my thoughts go out to them at this sad time. A true hero."

Corporal Thomas Cook, Mortar Fire Controller, said:

"I first met Brownny when we were deployed to Cyprus. In an instant I recognised he was a soldier of the highest quality. He was a man with a razor sharp wit and an endless list of people who regarded him as a really good friend.

"He always took on any task and always needed to be involved. As a commander, he passed these qualities on to his men, who he moulded into a group you knew you could rely on. Our thoughts are with his family and friends; he will be sadly missed by everyone whose lives he touched."

Corporal Frankie Mason, section commander, 1 Platoon, A Company wrote:

"I have known Brownny for over ten years and can't even begin to describe the numbness felt due to his loss. He was a man who was outstanding in everything he set out to do, be it his job or otherwise. The part of him I will miss most was his sense of humour, which was always mischievous and, among the blokes, was infectious. I'm sure the gaping hole left by his loss will be filled with the happy memories of all who knew him.

"The Battalion has lost one of its most promising stars, and I and others have lost a great friend; my thoughts are now with his family. Safe journey and God bless mate, Frankie."

Corporal Kevin Ball, section commander, 3 Platoon, A Company wrote:

"Corporal Lee Brownson, Brownny to mates or known to myself as Lee was a friend, a true friend. My best friend, a brother I would look up to. As a soldier he was, who I wanted to be. I looked to take inspiration from his work: in my opinion he was the best soldier and the best section commander this battalion had to offer and he was the man everyone wanted to be. When he led a patrol the rest of his section felt safe knowing the best of the best was at the very front, leading by example.

"Brownny joined the army to do what he knew best: to soldier, to serve his country, and to serve his comrades well. A Company has been dealt a massive blow due to the loss of Corporal Brownson, a gap that can never be filled. Brownny has gone but will never be forgotten.

"You'll always be in my thoughts, my prayers, my heart; the 15th of January will never leave me. My thoughts are with his wife Leeanne and his daughters Ginalee and Morgan and his unborn child. Goodbye mate, love you and thinking of you always."

Corporal Emma Henderson, Combat Medic said:

"I am not quite sure what to write, as I feel that none of this is real. I still keep expecting you to burst through the ops room door asking "What's happening?" with that grin on your face like you were up to something, or had already done something! Or you were coming to see me with one of your 'minor injuries'! I will always remember the cooking sessions you, Cass and I had going.

"My thoughts go out to your wife Leeanne who you always spoke so fondly of, and also your two daughters Ginalee and Morgan. You were so full of life Brownny, you will be deeply missed by everyone. R.I.P. (P.S. I am sure it was your turn for the brews!)."

Lance Corporal Johnny Cassell, 2 Platoon said:

"I first met Lee in 2004 when I joined Sniper Platoon 2LI. We instantly became solid friends, as we shared similar interests and lived near each other in Co Durham. He was known as a bit of a 'Del Boy' in Battalion and never failed to make me laugh with stories of his latest money-making schemes.

"We used to spend many a night at the car auctions where we would dream about being able to afford a posh 'Beemer' or Merc. He was an awesome soldier, relaxed but professional at the same time, he never flapped and always knew exactly what he was doing. He attacked jobs that needed doing with the strength of ten men and in so doing inspired both those under and above his command to do the same.

"As well as being an awesome soldier, Lee was also a fiercely devoted family man, and my thoughts are with his wife Leeanne, his two girls Ginalee and Morgan, and his unborn child due this summer.

"All-in-all no words I've written here can ever sum up what an incredible man Lee Brownson was; I feel privileged to have known him for the time that I did. I'm totally gutted that he's gone, and I think that everyone will agree with me that men like Lee don't come round too often. He's

irreplaceable. I miss you mate, and I'll never forget you."

Rifleman Jerome Cupid, 2 Platoon A Company said:

"To write this eulogy is hard for me. Corporal Brownson, "Brownny" was a motivator and successful at what he did. He always made us work hard in all that we did, because he knew what the Army was about, he also wanted us all to be a success in this regiment. If you ask anyone about "Brownny" they will tell you he is one of a kind. Corporal Brownson will always be in our hearts. We will always remember him."

Rifleman Sam Glasby, 2 Platoon A Company said:

"In memory of Corporal Lee Brownson: words can't even describe how tragic Corporal Brownson's death is; he was my section commander and a well-known face to everyone. He always led by example and wanted us to be as good as him one day.

"When I was on patrol with him I always felt safe, he just used to say "Take your time mate, no rush". My heart goes out to his wife and kids, we will do as much as we can to help. Rest in peace mate, you will always be in our hearts and always on our minds."

Rifleman Lamin Sanneh, 2 Platoon A Company said:

"Gone but not forgotten. Brownny was a good and kind man who everyone looked at like a father figure. He was funny, caring and always looked after the lads, making sure we were ready for anything out in the field.

"He motivated us and gave us all courage. Every time I looked at him I smiled, and I used to say to him "Brownny I really love you" to which he would always reply "I love you too Sanneh and I will look after you all the way to the end of the tour."

Rifleman Eddie Foster, 2 Platoon A Company said:

"Corporal Brownson, known to his friends as Brownny, was my section commander. He wouldn't tell anyone to do anything he wouldn't do himself, and he led by example. He always had a smile on his face, and I always looked to him if I needed help. I remember when we were confirming an IED that I had found and all this smoke started coming out of the ground, so Brownny shouted "Run!" and we all scurried away, before bursting into uncontrollable laughter.

"That's the kind of man he was, a bubbly person who always saw the bright side during the worst of tasks. This is why I respected him, not just as my commander but also as a friend. He will be bitterly missed and my thoughts are with his family. Rest in peace mate, we'll all remember you."

Rifleman Tom Robson, 2 Platoon A Company said:

"Brownny, where do I start? I first met him when he came to A Company before Kosovo in 2008. He was an awesome soldier and an even better commander. He would always look out for his section and put us before himself.

"It is a terrible loss to us as a Platoon but we know that he will always play a part in our lives as he made us the way we are now. It's devastating but even more so for the family he left behind.

Our thoughts go to LEEANNE, GINALEE and MORGAN."