

1ST BATTALION THE MERCIAN REGIMENT (CHESHIRE)

Lance Corporal Alan Cochran was 23 years old and born in St Asaph, North Wales. He enlisted into the Army in 2006, was trained at the Infantry Training Centre, Catterick and posted to the 1st Battalion The 22nd (Cheshire) Regiment in 2007. He had previously served in Northern Ireland and on operations in Iraq.

LCpl Cochran's mother Mrs Shirley Jane Cochran; family said:

"Alan was a tremendous son. He was proud to be a soldier and died doing a job he loved. We are devastated by the loss of Alan who was a loving son, grand son and brother. We are proud of the fact that Alan was prepared to do his duty helping the people of Afghanistan."

LCpl Cochran's fiancée Claire Brookshaw said:

"I have known Alan for over 2 years. He was a fantastic fiancé. He has been a great part of my life and always will be. Sadly missed but never forgotten. Rest in peace Darlin, Love you always and forever."

LCpl Cochran's fiancée's parents Carol and Tony Lewis & family said:

"We have known Alan for 2 years. He was a very special individual and would have made a wonderful son in law. Sadly missed, sleep tight."

Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Hadfield, Commanding Officer 1st Battalion The Mercian Regiment (Cheshire) said:

"Lance Corporal Alan Cochran, known to his friends in the Battalion as 'Cockers', or 'The Colonel', was serving with B Company when he died. He joined the 1st Battalion the 22nd (Cheshire) Regiment in 2007, and quickly established a reputation as a strong and committed Infantry soldier.

"It is no surprise to anyone who knew him that he was to the front when his patrol came into contact and, as was always his way, he was committed to the safety of others to the end. Alan had been in the Army for four years and had served in Northern Ireland, Iraq and Kenya prior to deploying to Afghanistan with the Battalion.

"A committed career soldier Alan loved the Army and his friends within it, and was probably the most selfless of men, always looking out for others and helping them to give their best. His friends described him as having a heart of gold, being totally unselfish, and having the worst dress sense in the Battalion.

"He had recently promoted to Lance Corporal following completion of a demanding qualification course conducted in the harsh British winter. When I gave him his chevron and asked him if he was ready to take responsibility for the lives of his fellow men, he looked me straight in the eye and answered 'yes'. And he did, right up until the very last.

"There is no doubt that Alan had a successful career ahead of him, as a soldier and as a leader. He will be much missed by his friends and he has left a hole that will never be filled. He was engaged to be married to Claire, the sister of one of his friends in B Company, and our thoughts are with her, his mother Shirley and all his family and friends at this most difficult time."

Lieutenant Colonel Gerald Strickland MBE, Commanding Officer The 1st Battalion The Royal Gurkha Rifles Battlegroup, Combined Force NAHR-E SARAJ (SOUTH) said:

"Lance Corporal Alan Cochran was a tower of strength in a company notable for its courage, commitment and close bonds of friendship. He died leading his men in battle, from the front. His loss is felt deeply across the battlegroup.

"He rose to every demand placed on him in this difficult operation, stepping out of his base daily with the quiet confidence that so effectively inspires others.

"It was an honour to have served with him, and the reputation of his fine Regiment has been raised one notch higher by his example of personal commitment, bravery and sacrifice. We all mourn his loss."

Major Rich Grover, Officer Commanding B (Malta) Company, 1st Battalion The Mercian Regiment (Cheshire) said:

"It is hard to put into words how the loss of Lance Corporal Cochran has affected everyone in Malta Company. Newly promoted following a recent Junior Non-Commissioned Officers' Cadre, Lance Corporal Cochran was thriving in his rank.

"He had an attitude that every commander wants in their team; you knew he would never give up no matter what the challenge. A harder worker would have been nigh on impossible to find. Naturally quiet, he let his actions speak louder than words. Always happiest when busy with the job in hand, he was a man who led from the front.

"Popular with all who knew him, he had a personality that endeared him to everyone, and he was trusted as a soldier who would break down a brick wall with his bare hands to help his mates.

"His loss is felt by us all, and it is with heavy hearts that we all wish his family and friends our deepest sympathy in these tragic times. We will not forget him, and his sacrifice will inspire us all to remember that what he died for was not in vain. Stand firm, we will remember."

Major Chris Wood, Officer Commanding C Company, 1st Battalion The Mercian Regiment

(Cheshire) said:

"I have known Lance Corporal Alan Cochran for almost 2 years whilst I have commanded C Company C Company, 1st Battalion The Mercian Regiment (Cheshire).

"He was always a key figure within the Company; a fine example to the junior soldiers and an enthusiastic and motivated junior commander. It is often said that fallen soldiers were of the highest calibre with a bright future ahead of them.

"This is especially true of Lance Corporal Alan Cochran. He had recently passed the Junior Non-Commissioned Officers' Cadre, something he had always strived for in the time that I had known him, and it was the start of a very promising career.

"He would have certainly been a star of the future. It is with great sadness that we mourn the loss of this fine man and outstanding soldier. Our thoughts are with his fiancée Claire and his family and friends back home."

Private Ian Brookshaw, brother of Lance Corporal Cochran's fiancée, B (Malta) Company, 1st Battalion The Mercian Regiment (Cheshire) said:

"Alan, I remember the first time we met, I was in week 18 of training and you joined my platoon. Even though you were new you fitted in quickly and started taking control and leading from the front.

"We then left and joined the same platoon, 8 Platoon 1st Battalion The Mercian Regiment, and we settled in easily together. A short time after that we were in Iraq and that is where you got the nickname 'The Colonel' because you were giving out orders all the time.

"I remember the time you turned 21 and you were in a sangar and the platoon sang happy birthday on the company net and we all got creased by the Platoon Sergeant.

"When we got back in England, my mum and sister Claire picked us both up from the airport, you got in the back with Claire and you were chatting her up but I didn't mind because you were my best mate.

"Even though you were my best friend I couldn't get rid of you, I'd be at work with you and then at home with you as well because you would be with Claire, who is now your fiancée.

"I am proud you were going to be my brother-in-law and I am proud that I fought alongside you for four years. You died in the job you loved and helping another injured soldier. You're a kind hearted man and you'll never be forgotten. Love you Alan, Rest in Peace."