

1st Battalion Coldstream Guards

It is with sadness that the Ministry of Defence must confirm that Lance Corporal Darren Hicks from 1st Battalion Coldstream Guards was killed in Afghanistan on Thursday 11 February 2010.

Lance Corporal Darren Hicks died as a result of an explosion that happened in the Babaji district of central Helmand province.

Lance Corporal Darren Hicks, aged 29 from Mousehole in Cornwall, was one of life's truly genuine people, immensely liked by his seniors and subordinates alike. He enlisted on 14 October 1999 and after training joined the 1st Battalion Coldstream Guards stationed in Windsor in June 2000, in time to experience his first of many State Ceremonial occasions and Public Duties.

The Battalion was soon preparing for operations, but this time for a 2 year residential tour to Londonderry. On completion of the tour in Londonderry, Lance Corporal Hicks attended a Lance Corporal Drill and Tactics Cadre at the Foot Guards, and the Parachute Regiment Centralised Course, whereupon successful completion he was duly promoted to Lance Corporal.

Once posted back to Aldershot, the Battalion began to re-role as a Mechanised Battalion, where Lance Corporal Hicks proved to be invaluable, both as a qualified Saxon driver, and also in managing his Platoon fleet of Saxons. 2004 saw Lance Corporal Hicks deploy to Jamaica as a Section 2IC to conduct jungle training, where he excelled.

In April 2005 Lance Corporal Hicks deployed to Iraq on Operation TELIC 6 as a team commander and in October 2007 he deployed on operations again, this time to Afghanistan on Operation HERRICK 7. Lance Corporal Hicks successfully completed his Skill at Arms phase on the Section Commanders Battle Course prior to deploying back to Afghanistan in Oct 2009 on Operation HERRICK 11.

Lance Corporal Hicks was an all round great guy. He was adored by his men and respected by his seniors. Whether on parade at Buckingham Palace, training with his Platoon or more recently leading his team on complex counter-insurgency operations, Lance Corporal Hicks was always professional. He was a fine Junior Non-Commissioned Officer always leading his men by example – a true Coldstreamer.

Lance Corporal Hicks will be forever missed and fondly remembered by so many. Our loss is enormous but nothing in comparison to that of his beloved wife Katie, his daughter Daisy and his son Henry. Our thoughts and prayers are with them as they come to terms with their loss at this incredibly sad and difficult time.

Lieutenant Colonel Toby Gray, Commanding Officer, 1st Battalion Coldstream Guards said:
"The Coldstream Guards have lost one of the finest Lance Corporals currently serving. Lance Corporal Darren Hicks was at the top of the list to attend the promotion course that would propel him to the next rank of Lance Sergeant.

"He led his men like a Lance Sergeant and they responded to his leadership as if he were a Lance Sergeant; they respected and loved him in equal measure. He was a character amongst his comrades and a well known figure throughout the Battalion. I always enjoyed the occasional chat with Lance Corporal Hicks; he was deferentially direct and a joy to soldier with.

"He was a keen rugby player, a son of Cornwall, and the sun rarely set on his smile; ready always to lend a hand or offer a gentle word of support to those senior as well as junior to himself. The gap in our ranks left by his untimely death is enormous. He will be forever missed and most fondly remembered.

"As well as being a great soldier and Coldstream Guardsman he was a devoted family man. The thoughts and prayers of the Coldstream Guards Battlegroup, Darren's comrades, are with his wife Katie, his daughter Daisy and his son Henry, his beloved family."

Major Toby Till, Officer Commanding Number One Company, 1st Battalion Coldstream Guards said:

"When I joined the Company, one of the first Non Commissioned Officers that I met was Lance Corporal Darren Hicks, I had arrived from the MOD and Darren and the rest of the Company had returned from Kabul a few months earlier. In those initial moments I still recall that I was aware that I had just met someone special, someone who understood the heartbeat of the Company, not afraid to tell you how it was, and someone that I knew I could trust and empathise with in the years to come.

"Darren Hicks was the senior Lance Corporal in No 1 Company and brought with him considerable experience from a two year residential tour in Londonderry, in addition to tours in Iraq in 2005 and Afghanistan in 2008, as well as State Ceremonial duties.

"He was a natural selfless leader, not only in the field but one of those blokes who young Guardsmen would naturally feel a confidence in, he was someone that the whole Company looked up to and respected. He was always there for those in his Section to make their lives better during the tour. He was the bright ideas guy, always thinking of new ways to improve things for the benefit of everyone.

"I had seen a lot of Darren over the last week as he had been one of the team helping in the construction of a new check point in the nearby village. As always he was full of enthusiasm and laughs, ensuring that the attached Afghan National Army were as well motivated as those under his Command.

"I then spoke with Darren before he went on what was to be his last patrol. He was looking after those around him and ensuring that they had everything they needed, a leader, guide, and true friend who will be missed by us all. A man with a great future ahead of him, we will always

remember him fondly.

"I know that as much as we all feel the pain of the loss of Lance Corporal Hicks there is a small part of rural Cornwall that feels the loss far greater. Whilst we have all lost a trusted friend and great mate, Katie has lost her husband and Daisy and Harry their Dad. The whole of Number One Company send their deepest sympathy to you and all of the wider family at this tragic time."

Captain Frederick Wells said:

"I had the privilege of first meeting Lance Corporal Hicks on the day I joined the Battalion. He had an amazing blend of loyalty, humility and humour; he was a consummate professional who managed to be friends with everyone while maintaining his authority over those for whom he was responsible.

"He thrived at everything he turned his hand to – in barracks, on operations, on the drill square or on the rugby pitch. He died leading his men, doing a job he loved. But above all this, Lance Corporal Hicks was a devoted family man – a loving husband and a doting father.

"I will never forget his pride when he returned to work after the birth of his son Henry. He will be missed by us all, but our thoughts and prayers must go to his family who will have to bear this tragic loss forever."

Colour Sergeant Paul McHugh said:

"I have known Daz since he joined our Battalion. During this time we have shared many experiences together, from the rugby pitches to the fields of Afghanistan. He was an inspirational young man, incredibly charismatic, who endeared himself to all ranks. He was a solid, dependable NCO who was an inspiration to the young Guardsmen. He was respected by his peers for his unwavering professionalism, loyalty and fierce pride of his Regiment.

"Daz never shied away from responsibility, always leading from the front, ensuring the safety of his comrades. This was most evident in October last year when Daz pushed forward, following an IED strike, and, showing his characteristic selfless commitment, gave immediate treatment to a wounded comrade, undoubtedly saving his life.

"I will miss my friend Daz. The Regiment will mourn him, the rugby team will never replace him – but our thoughts and prayers must go out to his wife and children in these most difficult times."

Sergeant Mattie Nichol, Multiple Commander said:

"I consider myself lucky to have commanded one of the finest Junior Non-Commissioned Officers the Army has to offer – fiercely loyal and extremely professional in everything he did. Lance Corporal Hicks was the backbone of 3 Platoon and he made my job as Platoon Sergeant so much easier, always right on my shoulder backing me up.

"His support and friendship will be sorely missed. Darren was loved and respected by everyone who knew him but especially 3 Platoon. He was a fantastic role model, always at the centre of

things. My thoughts and prayers are with his family at this difficult time."

Lance Sergeant Mathew Wallis, Section Commander said:

"Daz was a true professional in everything he did. Every Guardsman in the Company looked up to him; he set the standard. He was ever popular from the minute I met him. In our school days he would always be there laughing or joking with others – never would you see him alone.

"As a Section Second in Command he was second to none and would be a pillar for the young lads to lean on in bad times. Words are hard to find at this time and my thoughts and love are with his wife Katie and his two children who must be hurting so much. He was a true friend and a true legend and he will be deeply missed."

Lance Corporal Tom Hutchinson said:

"Darren was an amiable and cheerful man who had an uncanny ability to brighten up a room with his personality. He loved to have a joke and always made sure plenty of laughs were had in any situation. In addition Darren was a thoroughly professional infantry soldier who I looked up to and whose dedication I admired. I remember him as a great soldier and close friend who doted on his wife and two children."

Guardsman Andrew Martin said:

"I first met Lance Corporal Hicks in 2007 on the last tour. From the start Daz was a good friend, always willing to lend a hand and he was never too busy if you needed a friend to talk to.

"Daz was a joker and a massive personality who will be greatly missed. My thoughts and prayers go to his family and friends back home at this time, especially to his wife and children who he spoke about every day."

Guardsman Ross Caddy said:

"Darren Hicks was a great man who loved his family. He was such a proud man and he perfected everything he set his mind to. He was an extraordinary soldier and he loved his job. We have all lost a great friend and his family have lost an unbelievable husband and father.

"Let all our thoughts go out to his family, which he loved more than anything on this earth. RIP Mate. You will never be forgotten."

Guardsman Epeli Balidraiulu said:

"Lance Corporal Darren Hicks was a man that I will never forget in my Army career. He was a family man and also very professional at his job. He always knew what he was doing on the ground.

"I will miss Hicksy and my heart goes out to his family, especially to his wife and two kids. May God bless his family."

Guardsman Jim Kane said:

"I first met Darren in December 2007 on Op HERRICK 7. He was a man who was instantly liked and immediately respected, a constant source of inspiration. He was a popular man with a

heart of gold.

"His colleagues came second only to his family, of which he spoke fondly and frequently. A true friend till the end. Our hearts and prayers go out to his wife and children at this difficult time."

Guardsman Stephen Cortis said:

"Lance Corporal Hicks, or 'Hicksy' as he was known to his mates, was a top man who got on with everyone he met. He was always cheerful and you could always rely on him to raise morale if people were down.

"I've known Hicksy ever since he joined the Battalion and there has never been a dull moment, whether it was at work, playing rugby together or having a beer at the weekend.

"He was a big family man who loved his wife and kids more than anything in the world and would talk about them every second he could. Hicksy was a great man, and an even better husband and father. He will be sadly missed by everyone who has had the pleasure of meeting him."

Drummer Ben Thorpe said:

"I first met Darren back in 2004 when he was working in No 3 Company, and since that time I have worked alongside him on three operational tours. Through each tour Darren was always the one to either pick people up when they were down or lend the helping hand when it was needed.

"A big family man and a fierce friend. He always seemed to bring the best out of people whenever he was around. All our thoughts and prayers are still with him and his family."