

15 March

The Ministry of Defence confirmed the deaths of Corporal Graeme Stiff and Corporal Dean John of the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers on operations. Both were members of the Light Aid Detachment of 1st The Queen's Dragoon Guards.

The men had been conducting a vehicle move to the west of Garmsir in Helmand Province, Southern Afghanistan. Corporals Stiff and John had been travelling in a Jackal patrol vehicle when, at about 1630 hours local time, it was struck by an explosive device and they were both killed.

CORPORAL DEAN THOMAS JOHN

A SQUADRON FITTER SECTION 1st THE QUEEN'S DRAGOON GUARDS

Corporal Dean John, aged 25, was born and bred in Neath, South Wales. His hometown is Port Talbot in Wales. He joined the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers in August 2000 and after passing out of basic training was posted to 12th Regiment Royal Artillery in Germany. His subsequent postings were also to Germany based units: 1st Battalion Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers and 1st The Queen's Dragoon Guards. He had served in Northern Ireland, Iraq and was on his second tour of Afghanistan as a Vehicle Mechanic in the Fitter Section of A Squadron, Queen's Dragoon Guards. He was married to Wendy and father to three sons Ethan, Harvey and Dylan.

Dean was the epitome of a REME soldier: enthusiastic, determined, selfless, hardworking and loyal. He was a happy and loveable rogue who could always be found up to his elbows in the engine compartment of any vehicle that even looked like it needed some work. He had an enormous appetite for hard work and a tenacity that drove him to extraordinary lengths to fix problems. His inquisitive and active mind would analyse why some component had failed and seek a solution to avoid a reoccurrence. His consummate professionalism and wonderfully fun character made him a universally popular and respected member of the Fitter Section, Squadron and Regiment. He had a very bright future, having won an award for being the joint best Non-Commissioned Officer in the Light Aid Detachment of the Queen's Dragoon Guards and receiving a recommendation for Artificer training.

He was an avid motocross fan and had an addiction to anything mechanical. He loved his job and his mates and was never one to miss a party, but he was also a devoted husband and father. In the quieter moments of the tour he would speak lovingly of Wendy and with immense pride of his three boys. He leaves behind a gap in the Regiment, Squadron and Fitter Section that is irreplaceable and an even greater hole in a young family.

Lieutenant Colonel Alan Richmond, Commanding Officer, 1st The Queen's Dragoon Guard, said : "The loss of Dean John has cast a dark shadow over the Regiment. He had been part of our Regimental family for almost three years. He was a huge character who had a reputation for hard work and professionalism, capped with a wonderful sense of humour and love of practical jokes. He was a proud Welshman who loved his job, his friends and his family. He was one of the most incredible mechanics with whom I have had the privilege of serving alongside; so utterly dependable that people fought to secure his services.

"He was universally popular and so widely respected because of his incredible capacity for hard work and tenacious determination to fix everything mechanical. He was also so clearly happy in his work and had such a bright future ahead of him. Dean's death is a great loss to all of us in the Queen's Dragoon Guards. We will remember him and our thoughts are with Wendy and his family at this most painful times."

Major Charlie Waggett, Squadron Leader, A Squadron 1st The Queen's Dragoon Guards, said "At a time like this it is hard to put into words the sense of the loss felt by so many people for such a lovely bloke, for such a top man. Cpl Dean John was the best of so many things – always so bright and cheery, I cannot remember a moment when he did not seem to be at the top of his game. He was incredibly dedicated to his role, and he was immensely good at it. The amount of hours that he dug out to ensure that the Squadron's vehicles were task-worthy cannot even be fathomed. In recently writing a proposal for a commendation for his efforts on this tour, I commented on his 'unwavering professionalism', his 'determination to succeed', and his 'remarkable trade ability'. But Corporal John was so much more than just an excellent soldier. We, his friends, in the Fitter Section, in the Squadron, in the Regiment and in the REME, have lost someone who truly was a little bit special: someone who would always smile even when the chips were down. Someone who had a mischievous glint in his eye and an enormous sense of fun in his character; and someone who was there for other people. But our sense of loss is nothing compared to that of his wife and three young sons that he leaves behind, and to whom our thoughts and support must now turn, and to whom we can only offer our deepest and most sincere condolences at this tragic time."

Captain David Toland, Officer Commanding, 1st The Queen's Dragoon Guards Light Aid Detachment, said "Corporal Dean John could not have been a funnier, more hard-working soldier and engineer who would do anything for anyone. He was a hugely knowledgeable REME mechanic that demanded the best of his soldiers and accepted nothing less from himself. He was often found at his happiest when deprived of sleep, cursing away and completely covered in oil having fixed a vehicle; I don't think there was anything he could not fix. Throughout his time in the Light Aid Detachment it has always been obvious he was one of the best of his generation with the world at his feet. This is a complete blow for all of his friends and colleagues who could not fail to love this larger than life personality; he was at the heart of his Fitter Section and the Detachment. Our thoughts are with his wife and young family for whom words cannot describe how sorry we are that they have lost such a great man from their lives. He was an inspiration to us all and will never be forgotten."

Staff Sergeant Marcus Waugh, Troop Leader of Fitter Section, A Squadron 1st The Queen's Dragoon Guards, said "One of the remarkable things apparent by the contribution Dean made,

both personally and professionally; was the amount of praise he received from the chain of command. Dean was never happier than when he was "balls deep", his words; and by that he meant contributing at the top of his game. This was the environment where Dean performed to the highest of his abilities and showed all too clearly his true potential. Under pressure, and in the face of adverse conditions, he was a man who could be relied upon. On those occasions when a job absolutely must be done, he was always the first choice.

"When trouble struck his tenacious efforts, enthusiasm and clinical detail were a driving force, revitalizing initiative on the ground and regaining the momentum in favour of his commander's intent, which he understood impeccably. His resolve was tireless and he worked endlessly to ensure that the Squadron had the level of support it required to sustain operations. The Troop Leaders of the Squadron were particular fans of Dean's attributes, and would competitively lace their bids for his support of their patrols, requesting whether "Corporal John available for this one?" He was a man of selfless commitment who took it upon himself to ensure that all the junior and more senior members of the Squadron received the guidance and mentoring they needed to improve their abilities.

"In his private life, Dean was a devoted family man. He treasured his wife and was fiercely proud of his three boys. He would regularly recite the accomplishments and escapades of his sons, often openly displaying his unwavering love for his family. Our thoughts and support go to Dean's family and loved ones throughout this unimaginably difficult time."

Sergeant Jamie Scott, Troop Sergeant of Fitter Section, A Squadron 1st The Queen's Dragoon Guards, said : "Dean had a love of life and for his job that was unmatched by anyone else in the Squadron. He was always ready to volunteer for any task, and would carry it out in an utterly professional manner. His moods were easy to read. If happy, he would bounce around using the word 'mint' a lot; and if a bit hacked off he would make it clear, yet still with that cheeky smile on his face. All knew that he was never happier than when covered head to toe in oil, no matter what the weather conditions, or how long he had been on the go. His love of the job earned him the respect of all the members of the Squadron and the Regiment. He would offer advice and guidance whenever a problem was encountered, which combined with his personal bearing and uncanny ability to be correct in his thoughts, made him a special role model to those around him.

"Out of work Dean was a very friendly and sociable person, always the first to help others to relax. A main character in the 'Salisbury Shapes' club where he would take younger members of the Fitter Section on cultural visits to the "Cathedral" of the city, which as it turns out was the name of the main nightclub!

"Dean would often talk of his wife Wendy and it was clear to all that he loved her and his children dearly. Wherever he is now, he will be missing them as much as they will be missing him. As he would say, "at the end of the day", Deano was a central figure in the Fitter Section and the Squadron, both in and out of work. The knowledge and experiences he passed onto all of us, and the memories we have of him will stay with us forever."

CORPORAL GRAEME STIFF

A SQUADRON FITTER SECTION, 1st THE QUEEN'S DRAGOON GUARDS

Corporal Graeme Stiff, aged 24, was born in Münster, Germany and came from a military background. Having accompanied his father across the world on various military postings, he enlisted into the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers in 2004. After passing out of training, he was posted to 1st The Queen's Dragoon Guards, where he served as an Electronics Technician in A Squadron's Fitter Section. He was on his first operational tour when his life was so tragically cut short.

Graeme 'Stiffy' Stiff excelled in his field. He greatly looked forward to deploying to Afghanistan and quickly proved to be a most reliable driver and craftsman in the demanding environment of Southern Helmand. He was a hardworking and happy individual who loved his job and the friendships and camaraderie of his team. He revelled in his Corps' motto of 'Arte et Marte' ('By Skill and by Fighting') and was always found tinkering with his Jackal and ensuring that it was ready for action. He was a shining example of a REME craftsman, working hard and playing hard, and adding every minute to the morale and happiness of the Squadron. He was exceptionally adaptable and in great demand for his expertise, often volunteering to go out on patrol even when exhausted; yet he was still able to improve the morale of those around him.

'Stiffy' was a keen sportsman and a particularly skilful footballer who represented both the REME and QDG at Football. He also enjoyed his time in the gym – either training by himself or 'spotting' for his friends.

He leaves behind his girlfriend Lauren, with whom he was looking forward to spending more time, a loving family, and a host of friends. His hometown is Grimsby.

Lieutenant Colonel Alan Richmond, Commanding Officer, 1st The Queen's Dragoon Guards, said "The loss of 'Stiffy' is a great burden for the Regiment and will impact significantly upon the close-knit Fitter Section within which he was such a pivotal character. He was an incredibly genuine individual; mild, quiet, caring and selfless with a sharp sense of humour and lust for life. He enjoyed his job and loved the challenges that it brought, but above all loved the people with whom he lived and worked.

"He was a mainstay of morale and a hugely professional craftsman. He had a confidence and assuredness that belied his young age and lack of experience. Always cheerful and positive he was always able to raise the spirits of those around him. He will be sorely missed by us all and we all send our heartfelt condolences to his girlfriend Lauren and to his family."

Major Charlie Waggett, Squadron Leader, A Squadron 1st The Queen's Dragoon Guards, said "I was lucky enough to spend some time with Corporal Graeme Stiff and to get to know him well when he acted as my driver during parts of the current operational tour. 'Stiffy' was a lovely character; a mild man at heart, with a fun and caring manner. As a soldier, he was the consummate professional; incredibly capable in his specialised role in the Squadron's Fitter Section and bright – quickly able to assimilate new skills. He also fitted the adage 'soldier first, specialist thereafter', as he could turn his hand and his talent to any number of areas. 'Stiffy' was a great member of the Squadron and he fitted in so well with all the blokes, always being

ready to raise morale with a cheeky gag. However, it will be his enduringly happy nature, his ever-present smile, and his compassion for others that will be his abiding memory. His love for his girlfriend was so very evident, and he would always place a picture of her on his driver's dashboard, so she would never be too far from his thoughts. We will miss 'Stiffy' so much. He was a friend to so many, and our loss must now be tempered, as our thoughts and support turn to his family and his girlfriend Lauren, to whom we offer our deepest sympathies and condolences at this tragic time."

Captain David Toland, Officer Commanding, 1st The Queen's Dragoon Guards Light Aid Detachment, said "Ask anyone in the unit who Corporal Graeme Stiff was and the reply would always be about how great and fun a man he was. On tour he has proven that when it counted he was steadfast, reliable and flexible enough to soldier on throughout the day and keep equipment fit at any time. Every spare moment he would spend keeping himself very fit and he obviously loved sports. We had often spoken about his desire to return back to the UK so he could settle down for a period of stability. This was due to happen shortly after we returned and he was really looking forward to buying property and spending as much time as possible with his girlfriend after a couple of hectic years with a front line Regiment. This makes it all the harder to bear that such a young man with so much to offer was taken, but we will always remember him as one of the pivotal figures within our unit. We send our deepest condolences to his family and girlfriend at this time."

Staff Sergeant Marcus Waugh, Troop Leader of Fitter Section, A Squadron 1st The Queen's Dragoon Guards, said "Throughout Op Herrick 9 Graeme fulfilled his role, both as a soldier and a tradesman to an outstanding standard. The challenges that he faced were beyond that of the conventionally employed REME soldier; however, far from being out of his comfort zone it was a position in which Graeme excelled. This highlighted the depth and experience he had gained within his role, and meant that he became a sought after asset within the Squadron, applying his knowledge and trade, while deployed at the forefront of many operations.

"Graeme had a potential that is rarely seen amongst others. Although new in rank he displayed a confidence and enthusiasm that saw him compete amongst the best of his peer group. Intelligent and articulate, Graeme had only just embarked upon what undoubtedly would have been a long and rewarding career in the Armed Forces. Keen to exploit opportunities and his own potential, Graeme had developed an ambition to attend Army helicopter pilot training; and clearly possessing the attributes of intelligence, diligence and enthusiasm, he would have undoubtedly excelled.

"In his trade, Graeme was always keen to extend himself outside of his career scope. This saw him contributing on a regular basis for the greater good of the Squadron. Even when there was no requirement for his particular skill set, he would often stay with colleagues, working late into the night to ensure that tasks were completed, and that a hot beverage or food could be sourced if the guys needed it. It was through such fine displays of teamwork and camaraderie that Graeme was able to demonstrate his true sense of selflessness.

"An excellent sportsman, Graeme represented both the REME and QDG at Football. Whilst deployed on Op Herrick 9, Graeme used much of his spare time conducting his own busy

schedule of operations, which he referred to as 'Op Massive' (going to the gym) and 'Op Bronze' (sun bathing). Such was his own development and notable motivation in both these fields that he had soon recruited an influx of others from within the Fitter Section, all eager to emulate his impressive results! It is in this difficult time that our thoughts and feelings of support go to Graeme's Family" and loved ones."

Sergeant Jamie Scott, Troop Sergeant of Fitter Section, A Squadron 1st The Queen's Dragoon Guards, said "When Graeme first came to the Fitter Section he was a typical REME technician, very intelligent but at times a bit clumsy! Thankfully it did not take him long to overcome this and develop into an excellent tradesman, which was a mark of his character. He was willing to attempt every new challenge presented to him and was quick to adapt to new situations. So much so, that his vehicle commanders were extremely unwilling to release him due to his excellent driving skills and all round contribution within a crew.

"Graeme may have had a quiet nature about him, but he was the friendliest of people and quick with funny remarks and comments. If during the tour you wanted to find Graeme, then the first port of call would be the gym. He was always dragging his colleagues along so that he could 'beast' them and try to get that ultimate 'beach body'. Principally, this was because he wanted to look good for his girlfriend, Lauren. Those that knew him understood that she was central to his life, and he would always have a photo of her near him. They may not have been married, but it was clear to all that he wanted her to remain a part of his life forever. Graeme will be sorely missed by the Fitter Section and Squadron members alike."

Craftsman John McAvoy, Fitter Section, A Squadron 1st The Queen's Dragoon Guards, wrote

The soldier stood and faced his God

Which must always come to pass

He hoped his shoes were shining

Just as brightly as his brass

Step forward now you soldier

How shall I deal with you?

Have you always turned the other cheek?

To my church have you been true?

The soldier squared his shoulders and said,

No, Lord, I guess I ain't

But those of us who carry guns

Cannot be a saint.

I've had to work most Sundays,

And at times my talk is tough

And sometimes I've been violent

Because the world is awfully rough

But I never took a penny

That wasn't mine to keep

Though I worked a lot of overtime

When bills got just too steep

And I never passed a cry for help

Though at times I shook with fear

And sometimes God forgive me

I've wept unmanly tears

I know I don't deserve a place

Among these people here

They never wanted me around

Except to calm their fears

If you've a place here, Lord

It needn't be so grand

I never expected or had too much

But if you don't I'll understand

There was a silence all around the throne

Where saints had often trod

As the soldier waited quietly

For the judgement of his God

Step forward now you soldier

You've borne your burdens well

Walk peacefully in heaven's streets

You've done your time in hell.

This reminds me of him. It says it better than I can.

Craftsman Lee 'Smudger' Smith, Fitter Section, A Squadron 1st The Queen's Dragoon Guards, said "'Stiffy' was loved by us all and was my best mate. He had a cracking personality and the crafty bugger always got the good jobs. That is what I loved about him.

"He was always there when I needed him and his solution for everything was going out for a few beers. Considering he was a tech, he was a good drinker. He was always up for a laugh and was heading for great things in life.

"Graeme was liked by everyone. Not just by those in the LAD (Light Aid Detachment) but the whole Regiment in which he proudly served. I don't have a bad word to say about him.

"Graeme loved to wind me up but I could always count on him. I'm proud to have known him and to be able to call him my friend. He will be dearly missed not only by me but by many more I'm sure."

14 March

Lance Corporal Christopher Harkett

The 2nd Battalion The Royal Welsh

Lance Corporal Christopher Harkett, aged 22, died as a result of an explosion near Musa Qal'eh in Afghanistan on Saturday morning, 14th March 2009. He was part of a foot patrol from C Company the 2nd Battalion The Royal Welsh who are working to help extend and enforce the writ of the Government of Afghanistan.

Lance Corporal Harkett was very much a son of the Regiment and has been known by many as a boy and now as a man. His grandfather joined the 2nd Battalion the South Wales Borderers in 1946 and earned a commendation on operations in Malaya; his father joined the Royal Regiment of Wales in 1984 and had an excellent career over

26 years reaching Warrant Officer Class 1. Chris was born only 2 years after his father joined

the Regiment in 1986 and has grown up with many of today's soldiers or their children; he was always at the centre of the fun and was always liked by those who met him. He was a keen and active boy gaining all sorts of awards for outdoor

pursuits and playing football in a local league. It was natural for him to join his father's Regiment as soon as he could; which is what he did as a boy soldier in December 2002.

He was trained at the Army Foundation College in Harrogate and subsequently at Catterick before joining the Battalion in March 2004 in Paderborn, Germany. He started in B (Rorke's Drift) Company and soon afterwards deployed with them to Iraq where he did exceptionally well. He trained as a Team Medic so that he could look after his mates if they were injured, trained as a Warrior Gunner so that he could defend himself and his colleagues, and later qualified as a signaller so that he could ensure that critical information was passed to the Headquarters as soon as

possible. Being an intelligent man he was always quick to learn, but he was also very dedicated and keen to help. He showed great promise and earlier than normal, was selected for a promotion cadre in September 2005. He was promoted to Lance Corporal the following January. He then transferred to the elite Reconnaissance

Platoon as he was an experienced and very able soldier, and deployed with them on a very demanding and dangerous tour in Iraq in 2007 where again he did very well. He was one of the first to volunteer to deploy with his mates to Afghanistan as a sniper. He had already had a full and successful career and had a very bright

future ahead of him, just like his father and grandfather before him.

Lieutenant Colonel James Swift OBE, Commanding Officer, 2nd Battalion The Royal Welsh: "Chris was without doubt one of the characters of the Battalion. He was a constant source of good humour and amusement. He was always cheerful, worked tirelessly

without complaint, and could always be relied upon to see a job through. He was very well liked in his platoon and throughout the Battalion. Many of us have had the pleasure and honour of knowing him all his life and we will all miss him terribly. All our thoughts and prayers are with his new wife and his family at this

tragic time."

Warrant Officer (Second Class) Mark Hughes, Company Sergeant Major & family friend: "I have known Christopher for almost 19 years. As I was serving with his father Gerwyn, over the years I've watched him grow up to become a fine young man and soldier.

"Even as a young boy he was always polite and considerate to others and always had a smile on his face that let everyone know he was enjoying life. It was always pleasure to stop and chat with him. I watched him as a teenager doing karate, which was something he was very good at; I could see then that he would excel in anything

he wanted to do.

"As a soldier he was achieving all his aims in life with ease, becoming a Lance Corporal was great for Chris as he was able to show everyone his great potential to go far. I was lucky enough to have him under my command last year in the Recce/Sniper platoon. Always with a smile on his face, he brought bags of morale to the platoon and was the life and soul of the party. He was a Junior

Non-Commissioned Officer that led by example, and was first to step up to the mark when C Coy needed more manpower for their deployment. A well liked and loved member of the Battalion, Christopher will be truly missed by all - young, old, past and present. My thoughts go out to all Christopher's family at this very sad time."

Major Sid Welham, Officer Commanding C Company, 2nd Battalion The Royal Welsh said: "Lance Corporal Chris 'H' Harkett personified the spirit and character of The Royal Welsh. 'H' was ever smiling and always motivated whatever the situation. At the heart of his Platoon, he was essential to their high morale. Having grown up as a 'son' of the Battalion he was known and liked by all, dealing out constant banter to all ranks. His resolve of character was clear as a life long Swansea City Football Club fan, never tired of baiting those Cardiff City fans in the Company. His infectious humour and enthusiasm ensured that he provided the best form of leadership to some of the Company's youngest soldiers.

"A highly motivated soldier he had been quick to volunteer to serve on the Battalion's first deployment to Afghanistan. 'H' took immense pride in his consummate skill as one of the Company's snipers, always reassuring his Platoon that he would cover their '6' (backs). It was just such a situation that led to his passing, when he selflessly moved into a fire position to cover his mates' advance.

"A dedicated family man he constantly spoke with absolute affection of his wife Danielle. Extremely close to his parents, he was outwardly proud of following in his father's footsteps (a former Warrant Officer in the Battalion) and was well on the way to emulating that career. He is a huge loss to C Company and the Regiment as a whole. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family.

'H' Harkett, a huge character, professional soldier, Welsh to the core - a true Welsh Warrior."

Captain Alex Rabbitt, 9 Platoon Commander, C Company, 2nd Battalion The Royal Welsh, said: "I have known 'H' since my arrival at the Battalion and have had the honour of being his Platoon commander in both Iraq and Afghanistan. He was a trustworthy, professional and reliable soldier with a real passion for sniping. His final act

summed him up as he showed bravery and selfless commitment by pushing across open ground in clear view of the enemy to give covering fire for his friends. His sense of humour meant that he was a friend to all who knew him. He was always the life and soul of the Platoon and a constant source of morale. My heart goes out to his friends, family and wife Danielle. He will be sorely missed."

Sergeant Geraint Evans, Mortar Platoon Sergeant, C Company 2nd Battalion The Royal Welsh, said: "Lance Corporal Harkett, Chris to his friends and family, was quite clearly an outstanding soldier who was always full of life and up for a joke. He first came on

the scene at the age of 10 when his father used to ask members of the Platoon to babysit for him in Germany. Even at that young age, he had a soldier's sense of humour. We knew he'd follow in his father's footsteps, following his work experience with me. When he finally came to the Battalion he went straight to a Rifle Company where he discovered his love of sniping; a field in which he excelled, finally joining the Battalion's Sniper Platoon. He had a passion for Swansea City Football Club, truly following in his father's wake & we always enjoyed our banter about Swansea City and my love of Cardiff City.

"It is with great sadness and heartache felt by all who knew Chris that I write this, but my memories will always be of him laughing and joking with all his comrades and friends who served with him."

Lieutenant Nick Insall, 7 Platoon Commander, C Company, 2nd Battalion The Royal Welsh, said: "Lance Corporal Harkett was a key player in the Company. He was always upbeat and could be relied upon to lift the spirits of the guys. I never saw him upset or under

the weather. His morale was infectious and it spread to everyone he met. As a sniper he was on the ball during our first contact, he remained steadfast in an exposed location on a roof as he engaged enemy forces that were attempting to flank us from a building less than 200 meters away. He was a thoroughly robust soldier and an

inspiring leader to the friends he now leaves behind. My thoughts are with his family and especially his wife Danielle."

Corporal Stuart Thomas, Sniper Platoon Section Commander, C Company, 2nd Battalion The Royal Welsh, said: "'H, H, H Harkett The Legend': Harkett was a very good mate and a loving husband, who

would always go out of his way to help a friend. He really was an inspiration to us all. I will miss him terribly; I don't think I will ever forget him. He was a one-off mate who lived life on the edge and I know he died doing what he loved most [sniping]. Here's to you 'H', (try and keep out of trouble up there mate!)"

Private Gareth Kenniford, fellow soldier in C Company, 2nd Battalion The Royal Welsh, said: "'H' Harkett, well where do I begin? What a soldier and what a friend! I've known 'H' for all my time in the Army and he was always the life and soul of the party. It's like he was here with us, to keep us going when times were hard. Always helping and making sure you weren't feeling down, on operations and in camp. He will be missed massively by me and all of the 2 Royal Welsh soldiers. My thoughts go out to his

wife Danielle and his great family that I had the privilege to meet. Love Always Buddy - Kenny"

Lance Corporal Dan Mazey, Section Commander and fellow Sniper, C Company 2nd Battalion The Royal Welsh, said: "Chris 'H' Harkett was an awesome bloke, always bringing laughter to the whole Company. No matter what the situation, he would always have a smile on his face or be pulling a cheeky little jibe. Everyone thought that his sole job was to bring morale to whoever he was around, wherever he was, whether it was running naked through the Corporals' Mess, or just entertaining the boys with his impression of a robot on the dance floor. Working closely with him in Sniper Platoon and also part

of a rifle section, I can honestly say that 'H' was an extremely good soldier and an even better friend. We will all miss you so much mate, hope you are now in a place where you're safe. God be with you mucka, love you!"

Lance Corporal Jeremy Appiah, Section Commander, 7 Platoon, C Company 2nd Battalion The Royal Welsh, said: "'H' Harkett to me was the life and soul of any gathering, at work or socially. A 'one hundred percent' selfless friend, he was always willing to go without so that others didn't need to. Always hyperactive, he told me once that Danielle wouldn't allow him Smarties or orange juice! That I believe. He was by far the funniest man I've met in the Army and always wanted to be in the thick of the action. It has

been an honour to have known him and he'll be in my thoughts forever. The break dancing, 'Day & Night', was massive morale to me and the platoon. We had many an argument over the Swansea City - Cardiff City divide! He was a 'Swan' through and through. He didn't take life too seriously and he was the only man I never saw

wound up or stressed; he found good in every situation. All in all, what a bloke! The Battalion, Army and the World is worse off without you 'H, H, H Harkett'. Rest in peace mate, see you soon. You are simply a Legend."

Private Martin Ashford, fellow sniper, C Company 2nd Battalion The Royal Welsh, said: "Well where do I start? 'H,H,H Harkett' was a great soldier and an excellent sniper. He would make a laugh and a joke of any situation and he would always put others before himself. I enjoyed working with him, no matter if I was wet and cold and feeling down, he would always put a smile on my face. He was the morale in Sniper Platoon and in the rest of the Battalion. My heart goes out to Danielle who he often talked about, his brother Kyle and his parents. Well my friend, you will be sorely

missed and memories of you will never be lost. There will never be another like you. Love you mate."

10 March

Two soldiers shot dead in Northern Ireland. IRA claims responsibility for murders.

8 March

The MoD has confirmed the deaths of two soldiers and

injuries to four other persons in an attack at Massareene Barracks in Antrim, Northern Ireland. The next of kin are being informed and further information will be released in due course. The circumstances and details of the attack are currently under investigation by the Police Service of Northern Ireland.

Defence Secretary John Hutton said: "I wish to express my sincere condolences to the families, friends and comrades of the two soldiers who were tragically murdered last night and those who were injured. My thoughts are with them all at this extremely difficult time.

"This senseless attack has only served to cause grief and dismay throughout Northern Ireland. No cause or grievance can justify such a cold blooded act."