

30th May 2009

Lance Corporal Nigel Moffett

The Light Dragoons

LCpl Moffett was born in Holywood, Belfast on 12 December 1980. He joined the Light Dragoons in July 2003 and served on Operations with Regimental Headquarters in Iraq in 2003 and C Squadron (The Legion) in Iraq in 2005 and Afghanistan in 2006.

From the very beginning he showed an enthusiasm for soldiering that stood him apart from his peers. Keen to try his hand at everything, LCpl Moffett ran, boxed, cross country skied, hill walked and played rugby with the Regiment.

He was very much a Regimental character, particularly due to his love of extreme physical challenges. He would routinely choose to carry the heavy General Purpose Machine Gun on endurance marches instead of his rifle. He carried his enthusiastic nature into the Corporals' Mess, where he could be relied on to be at the centre of any revelry.

In September 2008, LCpl Moffett volunteered to join the Brigade Reconnaissance Force for 19 Lt Bde, as the Bde began preparing for Operation HERRICK 10. The BRF is selected from across all of the Units from the Bde and acts as the eyes and ears of the Commander.

LCpl Moffett quickly established himself as the fittest member of the Unit. A Physical Training Instructor, he was responsible for running much of the subsequent BRF fitness training. He brought to the BRF knowledge of mobility procedures and long range communications and previous operational experience.

This helped mould the BRF through seven arduous months of pre-deployment training, where LCpl Moffett showed his natural leadership and physical and mental robustness on many demanding exercises.

His performance on the Live Firing Test Exercise, conducted in Otterburn in January 2009, was nothing short of outstanding. In the worst environmental conditions, LCpl Moffett was fierce and relentless; attributes which he would call on more than once in the coming months.

The BRF deployed on Op HERRICK 10 in early April 2009 to Helmand Province. LCpl Moffett was immediately at the forefront of the action, as the driver of one of the lead vehicles in his troop.

He fought bravely in many engagements with the enemy, beginning with an advance against an

enemy stronghold on 23 April. On 15 May, his Troop was pinned down by heavy machine gun fire; LCpl Moffett rose to the challenge and mounted his GPMG on a rooftop, returning fire and giving his troop the breathing space to win the firefight.

On 30 May, LCpl Moffett was taking part in an Operation in Musa Qaleh, scouting a route for his troop, when he was Killed In Action.

LCpl Nigel David Moffett will be remembered by the BRF and the Light Dragoons as a tough, brave soldier who was an excellent member of the team from the outset.

His father, Nigel Moffett Senior, said:

"He was a gentle soul and the eldest son. He had seven brothers and sisters and his late mother always said he was the most fantastic son and he was her right arm in bringing up his siblings.

"Nigel was a career soldier who wanted to make the Army his focus throughout his entire career. He made his Army his home and the Army treated him like their son.

"Nigel felt he was prepared for operations in that he was well trained and had the right tools for the job. Both he and his family understood that ultimately he could die although we didn't want this to happen. Ultimately, Nigel was a soldier."

Commanding Officer, The Light Dragoons, Lt Col Gus Fair said:

"LCpl Nigel 'Moff' Moffett joined The Light Dragoons in 2003. He had completed two tours of Iraq, and this was his second tour of Afghanistan. LCpl Moffett lived and breathed soldiering, and devoted himself to it.

"He relished a challenge; on physical training he would make sure that he was carrying more weight than anyone else, and preferably complete it faster than anyone else. It was not unusual to see him in camp during leave just so that he could conduct some extra training.

"He relished his role as a Physical Training Instructor and was always the first to volunteer for a course or adventurous training. His dedication, fitness and sheer enjoyment of his work marked him out as a star of the future and a role model to the junior soldiers.

"He died at the top of his game and showed all the potential of realising his ambition of serving as a badged member of UK Special Forces.

"Moff made sure that he never wasted a moment of his life - he wanted to see as much of the world as he could and experience everything it had to offer. He was one of the very best, and the Regiment will not forget his sacrifice."

Officer Commanding, Brigade Reconnaissance Force, Major Neil Grant said:

"As strong as an ox, LCpl Moffett was an exceptionally physically fit and robust soldier. He had many other attributes. He was charming and funny, with a natural Irish wit, which both helped him and got him into trouble, in equal measure.

"He was courageous under fire, and showed a streak of tenacity of which we in the BRF are immensely proud. A committed professional with burning ambition, he was hoping to attempt Special Forces Selection next summer after this tour. He would have acquitted himself well.

"Today, the BRF have lost a brave soldier and brother in arms. He lived and died for his comrades, who, despite being from all the Units of the Bde, are All of One Company. LCpl Moffett's sacrifice will not be forgotten."

Officer Commanding, C Squadron, The Light Dragoons, Major Sam Plant said:

"LCpl Moffett was attached to the Brigade Reconnaissance Force for this operational tour. It is typical of this man to have volunteered to serve as part of this important and dynamic sub-unit.

"Always on the look out for a challenge, Moff was everything that a recce soldier should be - resourceful, inquisitive, brave and determined, equally happy in both the mounted and dismounted roles.

"Moff will be hugely missed by all ranks of C Sqn, The Light Dragoons. He was universally respected as a soldier and a great friend to all of us. His personal fitness was nothing short of legendary and he set the standards in this department across the Regiment. His contribution, as a Physical Training Instructor, to the preparation of the soldiers of C Sqn for deployment to Afghanistan was immense.

"At the time of his death, he was knocking on the door of promotion and, in the rank of Cpl; he would have made an outstanding Formation Reconnaissance vehicle commander.

"Moff will be hugely missed and remembered forever. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family and friends at this very difficult time."

Company Sergeant Major, Brigade Reconnaissance Force, WO2 Martyn Chatterley said:

"I first met LCpl Nigel Moffett in September 2008, on the selection for the Brigade Reconnaissance Force. He was quick witted and an instant character. He was quickly nicknamed "THE LUNG" for his outstanding ability to run the whole Company into the ground.

"He had a flare for reconnaissance work with great spirit and a professional attitude; a man who would volunteer no matter what the task.

"To me, not only was LCpl Nigel Moffett a first class Recce soldier with whom I had the honour of working alongside, he had become a friend I will never forget. He will be solely missed by all. My condolences go to his family and friends. Rest in peace LCpl Moffett."

Squadron Sergeant Major, C Squadron, The Light Dragoons, WO2 David Rae said:

"LCpl Moffett was an outstanding soldier. It seems by looking back at his achievements and his attitude to his choice of career that maybe he was always destined to be a soldier, he was a natural but stood out amongst others with his dedication to becoming the best he could be.

"My first memory of Moff was of a young lad about to learn his trade in Bovington. Even at an early age he was not convinced his aspirations would be met in the Regiment he was allocated; instead he wanted to serve as a reconnaissance soldier.

"I would see him daily with a 50lb [23kg] pack on running the training areas to become fitter and stronger than those around him. I enquired as to why he was training so hard whilst others were enjoying the freedom gained from leaving Basic Training, his answer was simple, "I want to be a 'recce' soldier and I need to convince them I am going to be one". These words and his dedication had me wishing if only every young man had this zest for soldiering and this commitment to their chosen career. He was granted his wish and joined The Light Dragoons.

"Again we crossed paths when I assumed my position as Squadron Sergeant Major. Moff was more experienced having been on tours in Iraq and Afghanistan, and unbelievably, fitter and stronger than when we first met. He was the Squadron Physical Training Instructor, and to a man, we all paraded under him for PT with more than a little apprehension of how we would fair under his 'training'.

Moff took no prisoners and never eased off, regardless of how hard people were blowing and regardless of what rank they were. The Legion expected nothing less than a professional approach from him and we all benefited hugely from his expertise.

"Moff was a real Legion character, strong as they come, committed to and proud of his Squadron and his Regiment, reliable in everything tasked to him, professional at all times, and totally committed to his fellow soldiers and friends, but his character shone through also.

"Moff was honest, sincere, respectful and always ready to help a friend however he could. Moff is respected by all who knew him and we will miss this unique man dearly. We were proud to call Moff one of our own. His name will flourish forever, we will remember him.

"Our deepest sympathy and blessings to his family and friends during this most difficult time."

Cpl Tony Duncan said on behalf of his friends in Command Tp:

"Moff was a true soldier and a loyal friend. He was an inspiration to the rest of the Regiment and showed this by being at the front with the BRF.

"Before we came out here, Moff let it be known that if he died in Afghanistan he would be happy because he was doing the job he loved.

"He lived his life on the edge and always pushed himself to the extreme. Anyone that knew Moff

would know that the Army was his life and the Regiment a second family. We will never forget him."

Corporal Stephen Bolger

The Parachute Regiment

Corporal Bolger's family have released the following statement:

"Stephen was a wonderful first born son, brother to two and friend to many; he was dearly loved and will be sorely missed. Stephen was always happy, caring and generous and we are sure that those fortunate enough to have known him will share in the loss we are now feeling.

"We can take some comfort knowing that he died amongst friends, doing something he loved and believed in. We are all immensely proud of him.

"We would ask that the press respect our need to grieve in private at this difficult time."

His Commanding Officer said:

"Stephen was, quite simply, an extraordinary man doing an extraordinary job. He embodied a life based on service to others, duty and self-sacrifice - the life of a Soldier. He chose this life and lived it with a passion; he died prematurely, but he died doing what he loved.

"He gave his all for his friends, for the Parachute Regiment and for the difficult task he faced. How privileged we are to have known this courageous and talented soldier and every member of the unit is very proud and deeply honoured to have served alongside him.

"We think now about his family; our thoughts and prayers are with them, and in the silence of their lives we hope they will draw strength from the same memories we all share."

Of the two soldiers, Secretary of State for Defence John Hutton said:

"Lance Corporal Nigel Moffett and Corporal Stephen Bolger paid the ultimate sacrifice in Afghanistan, protecting the security of our nation. The comments of their comrades make clear that these two young men were soldiers of unusual determination and ability. This is a terribly sad loss for the Armed Forces, and I can only express my deepest sympathy to their grieving families."

28th May 2009

Lance Corporal Kieron Hill

2nd Battalion The Mercian Regiment (Worcesters and Foresters)

Lance Corporal Kieron Hill, aged 20, was born in Nottingham where he grew up, attending

Fairham College in Clifton. He was single with no children.

After completing infantry basic training at Infantry Training Centre Catterick he joined C Company 2nd Battalion the Mercian Regiment (Worcesters and Foresters) in 2006 at the age of 17.

He was true to his roots by being an ardent Nottingham Forest fan and true to his Regiment with the pride he displayed in being a Mercian soldier.

He started his Army Career in the Army Cadet Force where his larger than life character will be remembered by more than most; the story goes that the map and compass room was named after him!

On arrival in the Battalion, Kieron deployed to Belize for a jungle training exercise in preparation for the Operation HERRICK 6 deployment to Helmand Province. That deployment was a true test for all members of the Battalion and it was a tour in which Kieron distinguished himself.

Shortly after the tour he attended and passed the Assault Pioneers course followed by the Junior Non-Commissioned Officers' Cadre to achieve promotion to Lance Corporal. This was after an unusually short time which is testament to the ability of a relatively junior soldier.

He was a very keen footballer who was regularly chosen to be in the Company and Battalion teams.

Operation HERRICK 10 has seen the battalion deployed in the Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team (OMLT) role, which seeks to build the capability of the Afghan National Army by living, working and fighting alongside the Afghan Army Warriors.

Soldiers are part of eight-man teams living in isolated locations in austere conditions. This requires a mental toughness which Kieron had in spades; he was a true leader in the making. He always volunteered to deploy on operations and felt disappointed to be left in the patrol base.

Most of all 'Hilly's' sense of humour will be missed; true to the nature of a British Army soldier he would often play jokes on his mates.

LCpl Kieron Hill will be remembered by all as a brave and tough soldier who was a pleasure and inspiration to work with. He was an all-rounder who had everything required for a promising career in the true traditions of the British Army.

The family of LCpl Hill, said:

"We are fully supportive of Kieron being in the Army; fulfilling his ambitions since 13 years of age. He confidently thrived on the military environment, hitting his first promotion target as a 20-year-old.

"He was also very proud of his three brothers; Aaron at Nottingham Forest FC, Liam at Notts County, and his younger brother Joshua. Kieron will be terribly missed by his whole family, relatives and friends."

Lieutenant Colonel Simon Banton, his Commanding Officer, said:

"Kieron Hill was a charming and funny man. He was always ready with a joke and his sense of fun was irrepressible. His twin passions were the Mercian Regiment and Nottingham Forest Football Club.

"He was a talented sportsman and played football to a high standard. He was exceptionally fit, strong and capable and destined for a life in uniform. He was an Army Cadet and exceptionally proud of being from Nottinghamshire and of serving his country; his family were in turn wonderfully proud of the path he had taken and the example he set to others.

"Whenever someone needed help Kieron would be there to lend a hand, he was a team player and thought of others before himself.

"This was his second tour of Afghanistan and it is a measure of the man that despite a hard fought tour in 2007 he went forward again with a smile on his face and a hand extended to help his brothers. He is sorely missed."

Major Bob Moorhouse Officer Commanding C Company, said of him:

"I was aware of LCpl Hill before I took over command of C Coy; that is how strong his reputation was. As a Soldier, his sheer motivation was enough to overcome the challenges that a Junior NCO faces everyday, however, he possessed so many more qualities.

"He was professional, knowledgeable and commanded respect from every level. LCpl Hill would have gone far in the Mercian Regiment. As a Comrade, he was the one that kept everybody smiling and where no job was too much trouble.

"With so many characters in C Coy it is difficult to stand out from the crowd; LCpl Hill achieved this with ease.

"Although we are spread across a number of locations in Helmand Province, every man from C Coy will be thinking fondly of LCpl Hill's smile tonight and will be back out on patrol tomorrow hoping to emulate a fine Junior NCO and an even finer friend."

WO2 (CSM) Nobby Clark CSM C Coy, said of him:

"LCpl Hill was one of the finest Junior NCOs in C Company. Always with a smile on his face, he was one of the most popular members of the Company. His enthusiasm and likeable nature made him a real character within a tight-knit team. I, like many others, will miss him dearly and our thoughts are with his family at this tragic time."

Colour Sergeant Ben Cox CQMS C Coy, said of him:

"LCpl Hill was a fantastic Soldier who loved his job and his family. He always was a very smart soldier who always had smile on his face. He will be truly missed by his Company, but never forgotten."

Corporal Rigley Section Comander C Coy, said of him:

"LCpl Hill will always be remembered for his distinctive laugh, smile and joy. I had worked with him on HERRICK 6. He had high aspirations and could always be counted on to raise the morale within the team.

"He was the envy of the team for receiving endless amounts of mail and parcels from his loved ones. He will be sorely missed by all who knew him."

His Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team Commander Lieutenant Henry Stow, said of him:

"LCpl Hill was a larger than life character with an infectious sense of humour. He was a soldier who took great pride in his work, never shunning his responsibilities.

"Although young, having just turned 20, he was an experienced soldier with two tours of Afghanistan behind him. His maturity beyond his years was an example to those around him and the soldiers under his guidance always looked at him intently.

"It has been an honour and a privilege to have a dedicated and fun loving soldier on my team and he will be greatly missed by all that had the privilege of knowing him."

His Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team Sergeant Major Darren Aley, said of him:

"LCpl Kieron Hill was a fit young Junior NCO with lots of potential. He had the respect of all ranks and would never shy away from carrying out his job as a mentor. A keen footballer and an avid fan of Nottingham Forrest. He will be sorely missed. Stand fast the City Ground!"

His friend Acting Sergeant David Bates, said:

"LCpl Kieron Hill was part of my platoon on Herrick 6, he was one of the younger lads in the Platoon but always willing to do anything you asked of him. On more than a few occasions his age and willingness to fight went hand-in-hand.

"We were in a compound when the enemy attacked at night. One of the lads got to the firing post first, but 'Hilly' stood at the base of the ladder exclaiming that it was his gun and he wanted to fire it.

"When we came home we went to a Forest game and were able to go on the pitch. He went mad and tried to jump the crowd until one of the lads got hold of him."

One of his mentoring team members, Corporal David Wilson, said:

"LCpl Kieron Hill was a key part of our team. He was always at the front when needed, never shy to go out on the ground, always volunteering to be on an operation. He felt cheated to have stayed behind to man the Patrol Base.

"He was a keen Forest fan and had a wicked sense of humour. He managed to get hold of a water pistol and decided that it would be funny to squirt me in the ear for the next half an hour.

"He was a good person and a good soldier. He will be a great loss to all his civilian and military friends who knew him."

A good friend, Private Clamp, said of him:

"LCpl Hill was not only a good soldier but a very good friend; he was always up for a laugh and a joke. He fitted right in with the company boys and we enjoyed many nights out. 'Hilly' was the best friend a man could ask for, I will miss you mate, I will never forget you."

Secretary of State for Defence, John Hutton, said:

"I was deeply saddened to hear of the death of Lance Corporal Kieron Hill. By all accounts, he was an excellent soldier who commanded the greatest of respect from all those who served alongside him – both British and Afghan forces.

"His professionalism, bravery and commitment to his fellow soldiers is evident from the tributes paid to him and he clearly had a bright future. His tragic death will be deeply felt by his friends and family and my thoughts and sympathies are with them all."

27th May 2009

Lance Corporal Robert Martin Richards

3rd Armoured Support Troop of the Armoured Support Group Royal Marines

Royal Marine Lance Corporal Rob Richards (his family know him as Martin but his friends call him Rob) was serving as Second in Command of a Viking All Terrain Vehicle Section in 3rd Armoured Support Troop of the Armoured Support Group Royal Marines, when he was mortally wounded in the Nad-e-Ali district of central Helmand Afghanistan, on 22 May 2009.

Lance Corporal Richards was evacuated to the UK but despite the best efforts of medical staff and his own extraordinary fight he died of his wounds on 27 May 2009.

LCpl Richards died while supporting 1st Battalion of the Welsh Guards when his vehicle struck an improvised explosive device. He was given immediate first aid at the scene and evacuated to medical facilities in Kandahar before being flown back to the UK.

Many would have not survived the flight home but testament to his character, LCpl Richards battled against his injuries for five days.

A second operator driving the vehicle was also injured and is still receiving medical treatment.

Lance Corporal Robert Martin Richards, Armoured Support Group Royal Marines

LCpl Richards, aged 24, lived in Betws-y-Coed, North Wales. He was unmarried with no children.

He joined the Royal Marines in April 2002. Following successful completion of Royal Marine Recruit Training and the Commando Course he joined 45 Commando Royal Marines based in Arbroath, where he served as a Rifleman and then Section Second in Command and completed an operational tour of Northern Ireland.

He then underwent the Armoured Support Operators Course qualifying him to operate the Viking All Terrain Vehicle in May 2006. Following this he deployed for what was to be the first of three tours of Afghanistan.

LCpl Richards was a highly regarded and experienced Viking operator. He loved football and golf and participated in all unit social activities. His knowledge of the Viking vehicle and of Afghanistan was extensive and he was the source of much advice to those around him.

His courage under fire had been proven on numerous occasions during which he displayed great composure and skill. He led by example and was unafraid to place himself in danger in order to see the Troop through a mission.

His dry sense of humour and dedication to his friends made him a driving force in the group. He left a lasting impression on everyone who came in contact with him. He will be sadly missed by the Armoured Support Group and the wider Royal Marines Corps.

The family of LCpl Richards, said:

"Martin was an exceptional young man, much loved by all his family and friends. He touched the hearts of all who knew him.

"Martin was a keen sportsman and played football for his local team, Machno United, when back on leave. Martin lived life to the full and was generous to the extreme.

"Martin achieved his goal, his whole ambition in life, seven years ago, when he joined the Marines. His and his family's proudest moment was when he passed out as a Marine Commando.

"Martin, Robert to his friends and colleagues in the Marines, was regarded as a brave, courageous and supportive soldier, who was a keystone of the group.

"Martin died doing the job he loved and will be sadly missed."

Major Richard Hopkins Royal Marines, Officer Commanding Armoured Support Group, said:

"LCpl Richards was a unique, utterly confident and accomplished Viking operator. His eccentric pranks and arid banter coupled with his ability to dress in quirky PT kit or the most obscure items of issued clothing made him stand out starkly in the group and for all the right reasons.

"He was simply an enormous character in the Armoured Support Group Royal Marines (ASGRM) and he has left his mark on all of us. He clearly possessed his own inimitable style of leadership, routed firmly on personal example and loyalty and this was an obvious and phenomenal force in the group.

"As an operator, he had been forged on operations and his sense of importance lay firmly with the necessities of fighting and winning, all else was irrelevant.

"Rob brought something distinctive to the Armoured Support Group and his character will remain ingrained in our unit ethos and approach for a very long time to come. My thoughts and those of every member of the group are with his family at this difficult time."

Captain Scott Ashley Royal Marines, Second in Command Armoured Support Group, said:

"LCpl Rob Richards was a true Bootneck and like a stick of rock if you snapped him in half he would have Royal Marines Commando written the whole way through. Rob was immensely proud of being a Royal Marine and let everyone know this.

"He was totally committed and professional in his work and a joy to be around. He was a talented sportsman and very proud of his Welsh roots and would continually let the Englishmen in the group know what he thought of the English game of rugby.

"I had the privilege and honour of working with Rob over the last four years and he definitely left an impression on not only me but everyone who ever worked with him or whose paths he crossed.

"My thoughts are with his family at this difficult time; Rob you will always be in our thoughts and never forgotten... Here's to you ROYAL!"

Captain Gez Kearse Queens Royal Hussars, Officer Commanding 3rd Armoured Support Troop, said:

"LCpl Rob Richards was certainly the biggest character in 3rd Armoured Support Troop, and the Armoured Support Group as a whole.

"His love of amusing underpants and quick wit ensured never a dull moment for anybody in the Troop, and ensured he kept me constantly on my toes at all times, never letting me forget that I was a 'pongo'.

"Whenever an incident involving the Troop occurred, Rob was always there to pick up the pieces and comfort his colleagues. During incidents where ISAF forces were injured, Rob would always be the first to sprint out of his Viking to their aid, administering first aid and offering words of comfort and encouragement.

"Coming to the end of his third tour of Afghanistan in the Viking, Rob was the most savvy of all the Viking operators. He knew the Viking platform inside out and always moved his vehicle and section in the most effective and intelligent of ways, mostly under intense enemy fire.

"Rob was a true leader, always at the front, stepping up to the mark when others faltered. I, as a Troop Leader truly valued his opinion and ideas, as I knew his breadth of experience would always lead to the correct decision.

"Rob will be truly missed by me as a colleague, a soldier and also a friend. A truly unique character that will never be replaced who will always be missed. A gaping hole has been left in the Armoured Support Group with Rob's passing."

WO2 Group Sergeant Major Matt Tomlinson CGC Royal Marines, said:

"Brave, courageous, selfless in life, professional, reliable, knowledgeable and, if I quote Sgt O'Callaghan, an absolute legend. These are a few of the words I would use to describe the Einstein of Viking, LCpl Rob Richards, Royal Marine.

"Within days he would have completed his third Operation Herrick tour with Viking. Afghanistan was his back yard, so experienced whilst operating here, this provided him a comfort zone, he was already planning for his return.

"You could see how content he was when out on the ground, during the winter period stomping around in his black Wellington boots looking like Rommel.

"There was another humorous side to Rob, especially during PT sessions, his choice of phys rig was basically chad, regardless of his fellow marines digging out blind to look like an extra from Top Gun, Rob would be comfortable in a large pair of shell suit type shorts and T-shirt.

"Rob, we will always miss your presence,

You will forever be in our thoughts,

Rob the legend,

Rob the true original Bootneck.

"Time for rest now Rob, you've more than done your duty."

Sergeant Patrick O'Callaghan, said:

"Rob 'The Body' was the alpha male amongst the pack; the right man in the wrong place at the correct time. He had Commando spirit of the purest form, a hard working, hard playing Bootneck that I'm grateful to call a friend.

"He had the energy of a hundred horses, the humour of a thousand clowns and the strength of a million Paras. As all Bootnecks are, he was essence, very witty and fun to be around. Ladies stand down; your services are no longer required. I shall miss him, keep smiling Royal; your spirit will live on."

Corporal Glenn Melhuish, said:

"Rob 'The Body' Richards was a fearless Commando and a courageous leader always showing cheerfulness under adversity. Never fazed by any situation he was put into. A true Bootneck through and through who thrived on operations.

"Known to his mates as Rob 'The Gob' due to his strong opinions and outspoken nature, he was a legend in ASGRM and probably the best mate a bloke could ever have. He will be sorely missed but never forgotten, rest in peace mate."

Corporal Marcus Rose and Lance Corporal Jack Dewhurst, said:

"In memory of Robert Martin Richards, better known as Rob 'The Body' Richards. We have known Rob since the start of his Bootneck career, he was a character back then and his legend only grew over the years.

"After our paths had taken us down different roads we met once more in ASGRM where upon I saw Rob running naked around a field calling himself strawberry Rob with the lads trying to lick him clean. This was a true testament to his character.

"Rob was the epitome of a Bootneck. Once Rob had his sights set on something there was a no turning back; that even extended to him buying a car from the internet having never viewed it, only for its wheels to almost fall off halfway down the motorway.

"Rob will be in our hearts and minds forever as a true friend. We will miss his terrible dits, his constant arguing and his bad taste in fashion, contrary to his own beliefs. Let our thoughts be with his family at this time."

Lance Corporal Kevin Raynor, said:

"I have been fortunate enough to have known and worked with Rob for most of my career. I first met him when I joined Whisky Company 45 Commando and really got to know him well when we deployed to Norway together, where I once had to CASEVAC him back to our room after he'd had too much to drink only to find on my return to the bar downstairs that he'd climbed out the window and beaten me back to the booze!

"A true Bootneck. On a more professional level there are a handful of guys I've come across

that I would consider extraordinary when it comes to the job we all do out here. Rob 'The Body' Richards was right at the top of that list. Rest in peace Royal."

Marine Sam Pearson, said:

"LCpl Robert Martin Richards was a hoofing marine who showed all the qualities of the Commando ethos. He was also never shy to stand and speak on behalf of the lads whatever the subject.

"Rob also loved his job and was always keen to lead from the front. Not only have we lost a hoofing oppo, but we have lost a hoofing soldier who would stick by you in any situation. All our condolences go to his family. Rest in peace mate you will never be forgotten."

Marine Jason Hunt, said:

"Robert Martin Richards was a hoofing marine who showed the Commando spirit in abundance. Never shying from any task. Rob, as he always said, was a leader of men and his men would follow undoubtedly. Rob was for many an idol and all that you could ask for in a Royal Marine. I am sorry to lose such a good friend, rest in peace Royal."

Secretary of State for Defence John Hutton said:

"It was with great sadness that I learnt of the death of Lance Corporal Robert Martin Richards, who I understand was a talented young Marine who brought much to his unit. He displayed dedication to his role, spirit and comradeship and he will be sorely missed by his commanders and colleagues. My sincere condolences go to his friends, family and all who served with him, who will mourn his loss."

25th May 2009

Sapper Jordan Rossi

25 Field Squadron, 38 Engineer Regiment

Sapper Rossi was aged 22 and came from West Yorkshire. He joined the Royal Engineers on 6 June 2006 and following his basic recruit training he attended further courses to qualify as both a Combat Engineer and a Military Engineer Bricklayer and Concreter.

Posted in October 2007 to 38 Engineer Regiment, Ripon, North Yorkshire, he completed a construction task in Northern Ireland and then deployed to Kenya in support of 3rd Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland (The Black Watch) Battle Group. On return to the UK he participated in the regimental move to a new permanent base at Massereene Barracks, Antrim, Northern Ireland.

Following a period of intense training Sapper Rossi, or simply 'Rossi' as he was known to most of his friends, deployed to Afghanistan as an Advanced Searcher within the Joint Force

Explosive Ordnance Disposal Group. His role was to support improvised explosive device disposal operations and provide a high assurance search capability to Task Force Helmand; a role in which he thrived immensely.

Sapper Rossi's mother, Mrs Theresa Rossi, said:

"I have just lost my precious fun-loving son. He was doing a job he loved and was proud to be a soldier. He was a tremendous son, grandson, brother, uncle and friend. There will be a big void in all our lives."

Lieutenant Colonel Roger Lewis, Commanding Officer 38 Engineer Regiment and Commander Joint Force Engineer Task Force Helmand, said:

"Sapper Jordan Rossi was a hardworking, professional soldier with a natural ability to relate to others. Full of character, his outgoing personality and ever present humour touched the lives of everyone he met. He was a fantastic soldier, a regimental personality and I enjoyed his comradeship immensely.

"Always warm and welcoming Rossi was a loyal friend, doting uncle and loving boyfriend. He was blessed with an uncanny ability to bring out the best in others and will be sorely missed by all of us who were privileged to know him."

Major Eldon Millar, Officer Commanding Joint Force Explosive Ordnance Disposal Group, said:

"Sapper Jordan Rossi was an exuberant and fun-loving soldier, full of pranks and fun yet also a man of character, courage, strength and loyalty; he made an instant and lasting impression on all those he met. Despite only having served with the Joint Force Explosive Ordnance Disposal Group for a relatively short period he was already one of our stars; his infectious sense of humour and 'can do' attitude making him a friend to all.

"With an insatiable enthusiasm for life and considerable professional ability Rossi made an instant impact in our close-knit team. Robust and capable, with maturity beyond his years, he was thriving in the operational environment of southern Afghanistan. Always willing to shoulder additional responsibility and weight, he epitomised the very essence of a Royal Engineer.

"The death of Sapper Rossi has come as a heavy blow to the Joint Force Explosive Ordnance Disposal Group and I am personally devastated to have lost such a fine man in the prime of his life. It is with the greatest sympathy that we extend our sincere and heartfelt condolences to his family, 25 Field Squadron, and his wide circle of friends for their irreplaceable loss.

"I pray that they may find some solace in the way in which he excelled in his profession and the benefit to many which has come about through knowing him - we have been fortunate to have had him amongst us. We will remember him with great admiration and humour, focus on our task, and continue the vital work that he died conducting."

Staff Sergeant Chris Oldfield, Royal Engineer Search Advisor - Sangin, said:

"Rossi's character, smile, wit and endless sarcasm never failed to bring a smile to mine and everybody else's faces. He will forever remain in my heart and mind. My thoughts go out to his family. If I could ever have the privilege of a son half the man that Rossi was, I would consider myself a very lucky man indeed."

Lance Corporal Andrew Hodgson, Second-in-Command Royal Engineer Search Team - Sangin, said:

"The times Rossi and I spent together training for our role in Afghanistan were some of the best I've had. Working alongside him was like being in a family of brothers as opposed to a team of soldiers. He was one of the most loving, caring and sarcastic friends a soldier could ever wish for. I will always think of him as the brother I never had."

Sapper David Wall, fellow Royal Engineer Search Team member - Sangin, said:

"Funny, hardworking and always willing to help, Rossi made the worst situations seem bearable. He always found a way to lift our spirits with a wisecrack, funny noise or daft facial expression. He was one in a million, a true friend. I feel proud to have known him."

Secretary of State for Defence John Hutton said:

"It is clear from the tributes of his colleagues that Sapper Jordan Rossi was an outstanding young soldier with an infectious sense of humour who was thriving in the operational environment. He will be sorely missed and my thoughts and sympathies are with his family and friends at this terrible time."

24th May 2009

Fusilier Petero "Pat" Suesue

2nd Battalion The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers

Fusilier Suesue, or Pat to his mates, was born in Levuka in Fiji in December 1980. He joined the Army in February 2002, and on successful completion of his infantry training at ITC Catterick, was posted to the 2nd Battalion the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers (2RRF) later that year.

He was always eager and proud to be a Fusilier and Infantryman.

On arrival in the Battalion, Fusilier Suesue joined Fire Support Company and the Anti-Tank Platoon, remaining there throughout his career. In 2003, he deployed to Northern Ireland and was based in Girdwood, Belfast, during which time he was involved in Public Order operations. After a short spell in mainland UK, Pat found himself back in Belfast with 2RRF based at Palace Barracks.

During that time he represented the Battalion at rugby, playing with distinction. His ability on the field was recognised with a place on the Infantry Rugby team for their tour to South Africa in

2004. In late 2005, Fus Suesue moved with the Battalion to Cyprus, and during the Theatre Reserve Battalion commitment, deployed from Exercise Saffron Sands in Jordan to Iraq for four months, operating from Basra Palace.

On his return in November 2006, Pat went to Fiji, where he married Emalaini. On his return, he then deployed to Kabul with Fire Support Company, but was soon needed in Sangin with C Company as an integral part of their Javelin capability.

Once back in Cyprus, his wife Emalaini moved to join him in Dhekelia, and the Suesues moved with the Battalion back to Hounslow, West London, in March 2008. After the move to London, Pat again distinguished himself as a key member of the Anti Tank Platoon during Exercise Druids Dance, and then subsequently during the Battalion's period of Public Duties in London.

When called on to deploy to Afghanistan again, Fus Suesue threw himself into the challenge with his usual tenacity and enthusiasm, training as a Jackal heavy weapons gunner for A Company's Fire Support Group, now attached to the 2 Rifles Battlegroup and based near Sangin.

Fusilier Suesue's family paid this tribute:

"Petero epitomised the qualities of the Fijian Fusilier. He was strong yet gentle, compassionate and always willing to support those around him. His ability to include everyone is indicative of his friendly nature and there will be a large hole left in the community with his passing.

"He leaves behind a loving wife, Emalaini, his mother, Sisilia, his sister Litiana and three brothers, Taito, Varasiko and Jovesa. It is with great sadness that Petero will no longer be with us in body, however, he leaves behind a legacy of love and affection in the memories of all who knew and loved him."

Lieutenant Colonel Charlie Calder, Commanding Officer, 2nd Battalion, Royal Regiment of Fusiliers, said:

"2nd Battalion, Royal Regiment of Fusiliers have paid a heavy price with the death of Fusilier Petero Suesue. However, all of us know that this is as nothing compared to the loss sustained by his wife Emalaini and his family back in Fiji. It is some small recompense to know that he died a brave soldier amongst friends."

Lieutenant Colonel Rob Thomson, Commanding Officer, 2 Rifles Battle Group said:

"The loss of Fusilier Suesue is sorely felt across the Battle Group. He was a legendary soldier, awesomely tough and full of character and Pacific Island charm. His beloved wife, family and friends are front and centre of our thoughts and prayers at this unimaginably difficult time."

Major Jo Butterfill, Officer Commanding A Company Group, said:

"Fusilier Suesue was every inch the professional infantry soldier, and a big man in all senses of

the word. Universally respected and liked throughout the company group, with quietly irrepressible good humour and compassion, I count myself fortunate to have had the opportunity to serve with him.

"He was a character and we will miss him deeply. It is a small comfort to know that he died doing the job that he loved, amongst his friends, at the front, and in the face of the enemy. Our grief can be as nothing to the anguish of his loving wife and family, and my thoughts, and those of the whole company are with them at this, the worst of times."

Captain Anthony Harris, Platoon Commander, said:

"I have known Fusilier Suesue for three years. In that time he has proved himself to be a loyal soldier and steadfast Fusilier. Keen to support his friends and a talented rugby player, it is with greatest sense of loss that we saw this brave Fusilier lay down his life saving his friends.

"It does not surprise me to hear that Fus Suesue was at the front of things, he strove to protect the civilians and the soldiers around him. We will remember a good friend, a loyal warrior, a true Fusilier and most of all a loving husband. He will be missed but not forgotten."

Company Sergeant Major A Company Group, WO2 Wayne Caffrey, said:

"Fusilier Suesue will be sorely missed. He was a quiet, calm, professional soldier, with a can-do approach to his job. He was a key Battalion rugby player, a sport that he loved. Our thoughts go to his wife, friends and family at this very sad time."

Colour Sergeant John McCowliffe, Officer Commanding A Company Fire Support Group, said:

"I have known Fusilier Suesue for many years, and worked closely with him during a previous operational tour in Iraq. He was an outstanding, professional soldier who had a thorough understanding of his role in my platoon. He was an asset, a very skilled JAVELIN operator, and carried out every job he was asked to do diligently and without hesitation. It feels like we have lost a true friend and we're thinking of his family. He will be missed by the lads in FSG A."

Fusilier Robert Fitzgerald, A Company Fire Support Group, said:

"Fusilier Suesue was loved by everyone, and always had a smile and a positive look on his face. If you were down, he would always pick you up. Suesue would give you a hand with anything, if it was in work or in his own down time. He will be greatly missed by me, and everyone that worked with him and knew him as a friend."

Lance Corporal Michael Walsh, A Company Fire Support Group, said:

"Fusilier Suesue was a quiet man, but he had a powerful presence. Whenever you were on duty with him you felt safe in his professional attitude to his job and his knowledge. He was a thoroughly professional soldier who will be sorely missed by all."

The men and women of 1 Troop, 11 Field Squadron, Royal Engineers said:

"During our time with the Fusiliers at FOB NOLAY, Fusilier Suesue (known to us as Pat) has been one of the most memorable characters we have met. Not just because of his sheer size, or the crazy moustache he was trying to grow, but also because he was one of the most pleasant and courteous members of the company.

"He always had a smile on his face, and would go to great lengths, just to be polite. Although we didn't know him that well, having only met him whilst serving alongside A Company, he will be sorely missed. Our thoughts and prayers go to his wife and family."

His Fire Support Company Commander, Major James Bird spoke of his character and professionalism:

"Fusilier Petero Suesue was a true Fijian warrior; physically strong yet kind-hearted. He was a real friend to many and all of the Company will miss him dearly. Petero was a well liked member of Fire Support Company who proved himself to be a diligent, conscientious and reliable soldier that we could all depend on. During the preparations for Operation Herrick he worked hard to learn new skills demonstrating his commitment to his job.

"All ready trained as a Javelin gunner he cross-trained as a GMG gunner and Jackal crew member; he rapidly became proficient and a valued member of A Company's Fire Support Group. A combination of his passion for rugby and his formidable stature saw him being selected for the Battalion's Rugby team where he became a justifiably accomplished player.

"He was central to the social life of not only Fire Support Company, but also the Battalion. Our thoughts go out to his wife Emalaini and his family on their sad loss. He will be sorely missed by all members of Fire Support Company, the Javelin Platoon and the wider Fusilier family."

Major Jez Lamb MC, OC B Coy spoke of his time in Northern Ireland:

"Unusually, Fus Suesue and a number of other Fijians joined Fire Support Company in 2002 straight from training as it was acting as a rifle company for Northern Ireland operations. They had an immediate and dramatic effect on the culture of the company and Fus Suesue was central to it.

"The summer of 2002 will be remembered for Fijian families having all inclusive parties on the sports pitch, all dressed in sarongs throwing rugby balls around. He always had a huge wide grin on his face and would greet everyone whether he knew them or not. Fellow Fusiliers struggled with the pronunciation of the Fijian names so he was instantly nick-named 'Sue'. Eventually he became known as Pat, a derivation of his first name Petero.

"Despite being a member of A Company, such was his popularity across the battalion that within B Company his loss has greatly affected all of us. Since learning of his death, many stories have been told of his generosity and kind nature, including Fus 'Bad Foot' Wotton who recalled an incident when he found himself in trouble on a night out in Belfast. Fus Suesue

pulled the assailant away shouting 'No one messes with my Bad Foot!'.

"Fus Suesue was well known for playing rugby (very well), for his grin and optimistic outlook, and for having time for everyone. He will be sorely missed by all who knew him and the thoughts of all of B Company are with his family."

Captain Chris Dixon, 2 Royal Regiment Fusiliers Rugby Team Captain, said:

"Fus Suesue was a key member of the team, both on and off the pitch. One couldn't help liking Pat, he had a warm kindness and he always had the time of day to stop and say hello and chat to the team.

"On the pitch Pat could read the game superbly. He could judge a gap, move through it as if there was nobody there, dance around anybody trying to stop him, and then score the try before converting it himself.

"He has many friends who are devastated by his departure; he was truly a great man, a great rugby player, and a great husband. I will miss his flare on the pitch, I will miss his smile in camp and I will miss him as a friend and a colleague."

In a joint statement, Drummer Saimon Iroi, best man at his wedding, and Fusilier Paula Waqakalou, a close friend from Fire Support Group B, said:

"Born in Ovalou, the old capital of Fiji, he was extremely close to his family, especially his sister and three brothers, one of whom serves with the Fijian Army. An exceptional and fiercely competitive rugby player from the start, he was a member of the school team that won the Fijian schools' national level Dean's Championship every year from U15 through to U19. He continued his rugby career in the Battalion, and both the Infantry and Army teams as both a fly-half and winger.

"A genuine, kind, generous man he was at the centre of both battalion and Fijian social life, always present with his infectious laugh, humour, and insistence on a good standard of drinking! He was known as a man who believed and said that 'the more you give, the more you get in return', and was viewed as a brother to many Fusiliers, especially his fellow Fijians.

"Pat met his wife Emalaini in Fiji before coming to the UK to join the Army. He was based in Dhekelia, Cyprus and flew back to Fiji for the wedding with Saimon Iroi. His friends in the Fusiliers want his family in Suva to know that their thoughts are with them. Pat was loved and greatly admired by all who served with him. He will always be remembered and will be sorely missed."

Fusilier Joe Valensoro, a close friend and colleague, said:

"Over the course of seven years in the British Army, Pat was involved in countless exercises, and no less than five operational deployments. He was a kind, generous and sociable man, who loved being part of the Javelin Pl, and relished challenges.

"He was always ready to lend a hand and get stuck into anything, however unpleasant. He was a much-liked member of the Fusiliers, Battalion wide and he was a great friend to me and many others. He will be very sorely missed. He died doing what he loved and believed in showing courage under fire and a grit and determination when taking the fight to the enemy. We are all immensely proud of this fine man. Rest in Peace my friend, we shall never forget you."

Lance Corporal Wesley Tokalau, a close friend and colleague, said:

"It is impossible to describe Fus Suesue in just one word because of the numerous qualities he possessed, but unique is probably the one that comes close. Few people have the ability to touch our lives like he did, and he did so with such ease like it was second nature to him.

"He was a friend like no other who always had time for you if you needed him and his house was always open to those that needed it! He was a dedicated husband to his wife Emalaini whom he adored tremendously and as a soldier he could be counted on to give his all."

Lance Corporal Vilikesa 'Kia' Tubuitamana, a close friend, said:

"Fusilier 'Pat' Suesue was a funny bloke, always joking, particularly about my dancing moves. He was good on a night out and an excellent rugby player. He would always host all of the Fijians at his house, inviting us round to drink Kana. He never wanted anyone to go, always saying 'the night is still young'.

"When he got married, he invited all of the single Fijian guys round to his house. Pat was always willing to go out of his way to help out the single Fijians with no family in the UK."

Fusilier Tez Scanlon, a close friend, said:

"I first met Fus Suesue when we got back from Dungannon in 2002, he joined FSp Coy straight from training. Straight away you could tell that he was a top bloke, he had one of those smiles, a cheeky smile.

"In all of the time I've known him, he never said a bad word about anyone; he was a true genuine bloke. When things were bad you just turned round to him and say 'How's it going?', he'd smile a massive grin and look at you with big wide eyes and say 'Fine!'. There isn't anyone who knows him who doesn't like him, he'll be missed by everyone and this is a big shock. I send my love to his wife."

Corporal Stuart Fiddler and Fusilier Eugene De-Bruyn (Jav PI), close friends, said:

"Fus (Pat) Suesue was a quiet, but large character within the Platoon. He always saw the good in people as well as showing the good within himself. We have known Fus (Pat) Suesue since he arrived in FSp Coy in 2002 when he finished training.

"He was a top soldier who spent a lot of time in our Detachment, and was also a very good friend who will leave a gap within the Anti-Tank family who have always been close. We wish to

send our condolences to his Wife and family. May he rest in peace and watch over us all."

In a joint statement, Fusilier Joshua Masala (Mor PI) and Fusilier Kafoa Fatiaki (Jav PI), close friends, said:

"We have known Fus Suesue since 2003. He initially came across as quiet but funny person. He was the sort of bloke you could turn to and share your problems with. On Physical Training in the mornings we were running partners, we were always the rear markers, although not by choice.

"He loved the Army and would have done 22 years standing on his head. He will always be remembered as a brother and as a best friend by those who were close to him. Suesue will mostly be remembered by his beloved family and all the Fusiliers who knew him. May he rest in peace."

Secretary of State for Defence, John Hutton MP, said:

"I was deeply saddened to hear of the death of Fusilier Petero "Pat" Suesue. I understand that he was greatly respected by everyone who met him. His loss will be keenly felt by all those who knew him and I extend my heartfelt condolences to his family, comrades and friends."

14 May2009

MARINE JASON MACKIE

Armoured Support Group, Royal Marines

The Ministry of Defence must confirm the death of Marine JASON MACKIE, on 14th May 2009 in the Basharan area of central Helmand, Afghanistan. He was supporting IX Company of the Welsh Guards when his vehicle struck an explosive device. The explosion killed Marine Mackie instantly and also injured his crew mate who is still receiving medical treatment. At the time of his death Marine Mackie was serving as a Viking All Terrain Vehicle Operator in 3rd Armoured Support Troop of the Armoured Support Group, Royal Marines.

Marine Mackie was born in Bampton in Oxfordshire and was 21 years old. He joined the Royal Marines in June 2007. Following successful completion of Royal Marine Recruit Training and the Commando Course he joined 40 Commando Royal Marines based in Taunton where he initially

served as a Rifleman. He then underwent the Armoured Support Operators Course, qualifying him to operate the Viking All Terrain Vehicle. In September 2008 he joined the Armoured Support Group Royal Marines and completed pre-deployment training before deploying on operations to Afghanistan in November 2008.

Marine Mackie was an energetic and highly respected member of the Royal Marines and the Armoured Support Group. He loved all sports and was always a central character in the unit

social life. Marine Mackie was a very passionate and proud Zimbabwean who enjoyed hunting at home on the farm, a hobby which helped him become a marksman during basic training. He was admired by his colleagues for his work ethic and love of life. He was extremely proud to be a Royal Marine Commando and held dear the qualities of the Commando spirit and displayed courage, determination, unselfishness and cheerfulness in abundance.

Major Richard Hopkins Royal Marines, Officer Commanding Armoured Support Group said:

"2Marine Mackie was a colourful, cheerful and enthusiastic young man who I will always remember for his sense of fun and everlasting grin. He was immensely proud of being a Royal Marine and a Viking operator and took great pleasure in his work. As a member of my vehicle crew on several operations, he had proved himself to be a highly capable, dedicated and hard-working operator. Always at the centre of any pranks or games, he was the first to pick up a ball, bat or anything else that could be improvised and employed for sport. When on task he remained the true professional, focused and alert regardless of the hardships. He immersed himself in the life of a Royal Marine and was thriving in the operational environment. The Armoured Support Group has lost a brave and skilled operator but more than this, we have lost a loyal and popular friend. Marine Mackie was one of ours and we will never let go of his memory. His death is a bitter blow but we remain resolute and focused on our duties and will not see his sacrifice pass by in vain. My thoughts and those of every member of the group are with his family and girlfriend at this difficult time."

Captain Gez Kearsay Queens Royal Hussars, Officer Commanding 3rd Armoured Support Troop said:

"Marine Mackie was an outstanding young man and a superb soldier. Never one to shy away from responsibility, Mackie's ability to continue working in the harshest of environments brought out the best of this extremely dedicated young man. Mackie would continue to graft when others slipped by the wayside, motivating those to continue through the difficult times. A passionate sportsman, Mackie was a talented cricketer who often bowled many a batsman out with an improvised ball and bat made during extended periods in Patrol Base locations. Wonderfully generous with his time and energies, Marine Mackie epitomised all that it is to be a Royal Marine. As a soldier he will be missed as a true professional. A hole has been left in 3rd AST which can never be filled. My thoughts and prayers extend at this most difficult of times to his family and girlfriend."

Warrant Officer Class 2 Group Sergeant Major Matt Tomlinson CGC Royal Marines said:

"Marine Mackie was known to me as 'Makie' - but perhaps it should have been smiler because whenever we spoke he would always greet me with that smile. Despite hardships during missions and tasks, atrocious weather and long, drawn out hours of endless Viking operations, Makie would always appear from his vehicle smiling. This shows the true character of Makie, a true 'Bootneck' a strong fit Royal Marine, one of the brave, leading the section from the front despite the threat. Marine Mackie will always be remembered, it would be impossible to forget such a character. It was an honour to know him, likewise an honour to serve with him; it will be an honour to remember him. God bless you Mackie."

Lance Corporal Jamie McGill said:

"Marine Mackie was an unbreakable Marine both physically and mentally, always smiling when times got tough. Everyone knew him for his big grin. He will be sorely missed by all the lads from ASGRM."

Lance Corporal Thomas McDermott said:

"Marine Mackie was a strong Royal Marine and was always first to volunteer for any job. He was a well liked member of the troop, always with a smile and cheerful outlook on life. Mackie will be deeply missed by all."

Marines Jamie McGillick and Tom Leatherbarrow said:

"We both shared a room with Jason Mackie when we were at 40 Commando together, having all passed out of recruit training around the same time. He was an absolute pleasure to be around and was always up for a night out and a laugh together. We had a great six months together at 40 before all moving to ASGRM in September 08. Jason brought his sense of humour with him and always found something continually more honking to do to make us all laugh. He was excellent at breaking things but always managed to keep a smile on his face despite the admin vortex that was continually following him around. He was a fantastic bloke and we will all miss him deeply. Rest in peace mate."

Marine Anton Rushmere said:

"Mackie had the kind of personality you could always depend on to lift morale when things got hard. We loved to talk about home and family and often shared parcels containing biltong and ouma rusks, an African delicacy. Mackie was a family guy through and through and loved his girlfriend very much and my thoughts are with them all now."

Marine Mathew Vowles said:

"Mackie was a young and ambitious Marine. You could always rely on him to boost your morale either by getting caught doing something he shouldn't or generally just having banter with the lads. He was a true character in himself who had a lot of ambition. Our thoughts go out to his family and friends, especially his girlfriend. He will be dearly missed by all the lads and will never be forgotten."

Trooper Bobby Moore said:

"Marine Mackie was a strong character with a promising career. He was always centre of any banter or prank being played on the lads, but would always give the game away with his smile. Gone but never forgotten."

Marine Callum Gray said:

"Marine Mackie was a brilliant soldier and an even better friend. Mackie didn't have the best of laughs but he seemed to do it a lot so that is good! He had a great dream and I have no doubt that he would have succeeded. To a wonderful friend, a brilliant soldier and my brother, Mackie. Always in our hearts."

Marine Chris Bardsley said:

"Marine Mackie was a good marine and a hoofing mate. Always first to put his hand up to help someone, and the last to shy away from any work. He will be sorely missed by everyone in ASGRM."

Marine Ben Tait said:

"Marine Mackie was a strong bootneck who prided himself on upholding the Corps values. His cheerfulness in adversity was one which we all respected him for. His ability to never drip and look on the positive, is what made him such a valued member of this group."

Marine Baz Markham said:

"Marine Mackie was a physically fit and strong member of the group. Always helping out whenever he could. It was an honour to have known him and he will be missed."

Marine James John said:

"Marine Mackie was a very strong and promising Royal Marine. He was always up to help someone out and never shied from any work. Always found with a smile, he will be dearly missed by all members of ASGRM."

Trooper David MacDougall said:

"Marine Mackie was a promising and strong character who never shied away from work and he always had a smile on his face. Mackie loved life and most of all loved being a bootneck. He will be missed by all but never forgotten."

The MOD has confirmed that four soldiers were killed in three incidents in Afghanistan on Thursday 7 May 2009:

* Sergeant Ben Ross from 173 Provost Company, 3rd Regiment, Royal

Military Police

* Corporal Kumar Pun from The 1st Battalion The Royal Gurkha

Rifles.

* Rifleman Adrian Sheldon 2nd Battalion The Rifles

* Corporal Sean Binnie from The Black Watch, 3rd Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland

Sergeant Ben Ross

173 Provost Company, 3rd Regiment Royal Military Police

Sergeant Ben Ross, aged 34, was born in Bangor, Wales, 1974 but grew up in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. He was educated at Hazlegrove Prep School and subsequently Kings School, Bruton in Somerset.

Sergeant Ross joined the Army in September 1996 and upon completion of basic training joined The Royal Scots Dragoon Guards where he served in Germany, Canada, Poland the Balkans and as a Phase One instructor. Sergeant Ross transferred to the Royal Military Police in 2003 and was subsequently posted to Weapons Intelligence Section in Northern Ireland.

He deployed on Operation TELIC 4, completed the Close Protection Course and deployed to 177 Support Platoon, 6 Royal Military Police MP General Officer Commanding Northern Ireland. Having moved back to the Close Protection Unit as an instructor he subsequently deployed to Iraq as part of the Close Protection Team for the British Ambassador to Iraq. He has served on various other tours including Operation TELIC a second time, Operation HERRICK and within a Close Protect team in Sudan. In

December 2008 Sergeant Ross was posted to 173 Provost Company 3 Royal Military Police in order to deploy on Operation HERRICK 10.

On Operation HERRICK 10 Sergeant Ross was a team leader within the Police Mentoring Company. His role was to mentor, train and advise the Afghan Uniformed Police on security, policing and law enforcement, a role he relished. Sergeant Ross is survived by Sheena, a serving Royal Military Policewoman.

Officer Commanding 173 Pro Coy, Major Adam Quantrell, said :

"Sergeant Ross's tragic death has come as a huge shock to all of us and the hole that has been left by him, appears at the moment to be overwhelming. I know if Ben were still here he would just look at me, tell me to fill the hole and get on with the job. This was the nature of the man, a professional; a veteran of many tours with a warrior attitude and spirit. Fiercely determined yet compassionate and patient

he added colour to all our lives.

"Despite him being in the Unit for only short time, his impact has been fundamental to the attitude, professional standards and outlook the Company took on in preparation for this tour; forever looking for ways to improve the lives of those under his command, he always found time to mentor the young Junior Non Commissioned Officer's in the Company. His impact on these young soldiers was immeasurable and will be long lasting.

"A wise man once said that a truly great man is somebody that doesn't remind you of anyone else. Ben Ross stood alone in this respect; utterly competent and truly professional. Dedication, Sacrifice, and Leadership were his mantras and they are the best words in which to describe him. He was a giant among men and I am blessed for having him under command and the Company is blessed for having served with him.

"At this time our thoughts and prayers go out to Sheena and Ben's family and I pray that they may be strengthened in some way by the effect Ben's death has had on all of us and find some solace in the lasting impact his life has had on those who knew him."

Company Sergeant Major - Warrant Officer (Class 2) Sean Kimber, said :

"For all the qualities that you ascribe to Ben, and there would be many that all his mates could think of, I believe impressive is the one that simply sums Ben up. Impressive as a soldier, who could always be relied on by both his commanders and those that he commanded; in many ways he was my 'go to' man. Ben fell in the manner that he performed as a soldier; by leading the way and not shying away from the difficult situations he was confronted with. In many ways Ben as a person was more impressive. His composed nature meant that he always had time for people; rank was neither here nor there for Ben when it came to assisting those that needed his calm words of advice or his experienced hands to help. It will be hard not having Ben around, especially at such an early stage of the tour, however it will be offset by the fact that I and the rest of the Company knew such an excellent bloke."

8 Platoon Commander - Captain John Steele - said:

"Sergeant Ben Ross was a soldier who exemplified the Military Police ethos of leading by example. He was utterly selfless in his actions, hugely professional and liked by all.

"He died on patrol whilst mentoring the Afghan Police, a job he excelled in and found hugely rewarding. He was a natural instructor and one who led from the front under any conditions. He touched all our lives in a positive manner and he made a huge impression on those he served with in Northern Ireland and Afghanistan.

"The Company and the Royal Military Police as a whole has lost one of its finest and a void has been left which can never be filled. He was an inspiration to us all.

"He will be deeply missed and never forgotten. I extend my most sincere sympathy to his family and friends."

8 Platoon Second in Command - Staff Sergeant Dan Stephens - said :

"Big heart, big smile, enormous personality, as my right hand man and one of a few Senior Non Commissioned Officer's within a close knit platoon, I relied on Ben hugely and he never failed to deliver. His keen eye, sharp style and forthright manner belied an immensely loyal and devoted Soldier, a professional and outstanding Military Policeman and a compassionate and understanding man.

"In the time Ben and I worked together he quickly gained my trust, my loyalty and my un-wavered respect. Never shy of responsibility and never afraid of saying what needed to be said, he earned the respect and the trust of those he knew and worked with.

"His steadfast dedication to the job at hand and his soldiers was unquestionable and surpassed only by the devotion, love and loyalty he quite clearly had for his wife Sheena.

"Our Platoons' thoughts are with Sheena and Ben's family and I and the platoon miss him dearly. Your work here is done but will not be forgotten, rest in peace. "

Corporal Kumar Pun

The 1st Battalion The Royal Gurkha Rifles

Corporal Kumar Pun was born on the 30th November 1977 in the Parbat district of Western Nepal. The son of a British Gurkha he was always destined to try for selection to join one of the most feared Regiments in the world and after much effort, in 1996 he passed the gruelling selection and joined the British Army.

Following the successful completion of recruit training he was posted to Church Crookham as a Rifleman in A (Delhi) Company the First Battalion the Royal Gurkha Rifles. In A Company he deployed on overseas exercises in Malaysia, Kenya, Oman, Belize and had deployed on Operations in Kosovo and Bosnia, this was his first deployment to Afghanistan. In his last posting before deployment to Afghanistan he was a section commander in the Jungle Warfare Wing in Brunei. He was an excellent jungle soldier with unique skills that he passed on to the course students in his own

humorous manner.

As a Multiple second in Command in Afghanistan he had considerable responsibility, both for the administration of the fifteen man team but also tactically, leading men in a most complex and dangerous operational environment. He was a highly valued member of a team that had the critical task of delivering vital training and mentoring to the Afghan National Police. He consistently proved himself to be a competent commander and mentor and through his own quiet and reassuring style became very successful at teaching the police. His calm and patient teaching style combined with his expert knowledge left a mark on many of the policemen he mentored. The work he conducted without doubt has enabled the police in Gereshk to become more professional and in time more respected by the Afghan civilians.

Corporal Kumar was a first class soldier who loved soldiering and embraced the challenges that it posed. He was a very intelligent and capable individual who spoke a number of languages including English, Hindi, his native Nepali and tribal languages. He was highly regarded and respected by all. He had a polite and quiet character and was a pleasure to be around. He was a good athlete and a fierce competitor on the sports field. His service to his Battalion was characterised by the

highest level of professionalism, loyalty and dedication.

He leaves behind his parents, Dhanbahadur and Sukmaya Pun, a younger brother Santosh, a younger sister Bindu and his wife Parbati and two daughters, Klaudine and Petrina who live in Dover.

Major Chris Conroy Officer Commanding Foxtrot Company 2nd Battalion The Royal Gurkha Rifles, said :

"Corporal Kumar was a man of unique character and virtue. As a soldier he was unstintingly professional, calm and respectful of all, never failing to help and always willing to volunteer. A man of considerable experience he was the guide and mentor to many an Officer and Non Commissioned Officer, his advice always considered, well delivered and polite. As a father and husband he took great pride in his family and children and I know they were always at the front of his thoughts.

"Corporal Kumar was a key member of the Company and the space left by his departure will be hard to fill. On operations in Afghanistan he was steadfast, brave and a true leader. He looked after his soldiers as if they were his own, caring for them and watching over their every move. He died doing the job he loved with his friends at his side and he will be greatly missed by all.

"The Company's thoughts and prayers are with his family and friends at this most difficult of times."

Captain Pratapsing Rai Second in Command Foxtrot Company 2nd Battalion

The Royal Gurkha Rifles, said :

"Corporal Kumar was one of the best Junior Non Commissioned Officer's with a good sense of humour, well disciplined and a unique Gurkha soldier in the Company. He had great experience with an effective command style and was a key member of his multiple.

"Kumar you were loyal, very approachable, hardworking and always had a positive outlook in your day to day job. Your selfless contribution to the Company was remarkable. You were the most likeable Junior Non Commissioned Officer and well respected by all members of Foxtrot Coy.

"It was a heartrending incident where you sadly lost your life. I and all Company members are in deep shock and filled with much pain and sadness. I am sure our Brigade of Gurkhas are feeling the same to lose one of the most courageous and exceptional Gurkha soldier.

"Kumar, I and all Company members miss you; you will always be in our hearts. May your soul rest in peace. Our thoughts go to your wife, two daughters and parents in this very painful time."

Lieutenant Aloysius Connolly, Platoon Commander, Foxtrot Company 2nd

Battalion The Royal Gurkha Rifles, said :

"Corporal Kumar was a fantastic Non Commissioned Officer. He was hardworking, loyal and supportive of his soldiers and Commanders alike. He was greatly respected by all and the boys looked to him for support and guidance. He was an extremely fit and robust character, a great footballer and a fierce competitor. He had a quiet and mischievous sense of humour and I will deeply miss him and the support he so willingly offered. My thoughts and prayers go to his and wife Parbati and two daughters, Petrina and Klaudine."

Warrant Officer (Class 2) Chhabindra Limbu, Company Sergeant Major,

Foxtrot Company, 2nd Battalion The Royal Gurkha Rifles, said :

"The loss of Corporal Kumar Pun has cast a dark shadow over Foxtrot Company and the Brigade of Gurkhas. He was a huge character who had a reputation for hard work and professionalism. He was a brave Gurkha soldier who loved his job, his friends and family. He was very loving, never judged anyone and was always very supportive, nothing was ever too much trouble for him.

"Corporal Kumar Pun was a great football player, representing the Company in several competitions. He was always a physically strong and fit man."

"We will remember him and our thoughts are with his two daughters, wife and parents at this the most painful of times."

Colour Sergeant Kiran Pun Company Quartermaster Sergeant Lashkar Gah,

Foxtrot Company 2nd Battalion The Royal Gurkha Rifles, said :

"I was gob smacked to hear the loss of my true friend and beloved brother Corporal Kumar Pun. His loss has most definitely saddened the entire Brigade of Gurkhas and is a colossal blow for Foxtrot Company. This day has been radiated with gloom and is an agonizing time for us in the grounds. His loss has left a huge emptiness and unattainable sorrow to bear. Brother, sadly you have been taken away maliciously from us and you will be forever missed by all who had the privilege of knowing you and worked with.

"He was a very mature, caring and a down to earth man. He lived life to the full. It was just like yesterday that we used to play football together. How can I forget all the good and bad times we shared together? I will not forget your cheerful approach with full of positive thoughts. How can I expunge that moment you came to ask me for advice on your career? You will be fondly remembered by all of us. Brother I miss you deeply and may you rest in peace.

"He was a loving husband and a caring father who was treasured by all his families and friends. I would like to extend my deepest and heartfelt sympathy to his family on their loss."

Lance Corporal Mankumar Rai said :

"The 7th of May was the worst day of my life. It was hot and we were patrolling in the town for 2 hours. I heard a big sound in the middle of the patrol. I checked on my radio but Kumar was not there. Corporal Kumar was my best friend and comrade. He was always very good and helpful. I miss my best friend Kumar, may his soul rest in peace in heaven. I wish his family and two beautiful daughters the best of luck."

Lance Corporal Deepak Thapa said:

"Corporal Kumar was the best and closest friend of mine. I met him in Brecon the first time and ever since then we had been working together. Back in Brunei we were in the same platoon at Training Team Brunei (TTB) as a demo platoon and finally in Foxtrot Company. When I heard the shocking news that my best friend Kumar was no more in this world, I did not believe it, but it dawned on me later that I had lost my best friend forever. I was in shock and could not control my tears. Kumar you are my best friend, I can never forget you and you will be missed forever. May your soul rest in peace and may Goddess Dura Mata give your family the strength to carry on."

Rifleman Aita Limbu and Rifleman Jhapat Gurung said :

"Corporal Kumar was one of the best Non Commissioned Officer's in the British army. He was really friendly, brave, kind and caring, honest and co-operative and a kind hearted man. He was always looking after the team members. He was the best example of leadership and a real hero. Kumar Guruji you will remain in our hearts and memories. We hope your soul rests in peace in heaven."

Rifleman Tikaraj Limbu said : Dear Kumar Guruji

"You were our senior Guruji like a parent always caring for us. You helped in each and every difficult time. You always loved us like your kids. You were a hero. You left us on the way to our mission because God needs a hero like you. We miss you wherever you are."

Rifleman Adrian Sheldon

2nd Battalion The Rifles

Rifleman 'Shelly' Sheldon, born on 19/07/83, first joined the Battalion in March 2001, having completed training at the Army Foundation College Harrogate and the Infantry Training Centre Catterick. He served on operations in Sierra Leone, Northern Ireland, Kosovo and Iraq. He then left the Army, to try something else, and spent time working in IT Recruitment and for a Driving Agency. But it soon became clear that life as a 'civvie' was not for him and he returned to the Battalion in time to begin our pre-deployment training for Afghanistan.

He served in 8 Platoon, the Fire Support Platoon, in B Company, 2 Rifles. A Rifleman first and foremost, he was an extremely well-qualified driver and, got stuck in to the task of learning the JACKAL, the vehicle he was to drive in Afghanistan. He set about learning his new job at the double and with an enviable alacrity. When not driving the JACKAL, he also took his place in a

Rifle Section as Machine Gunner.

Rfn Sheldon came from Kirkby-in-Ashfield; he was a Mansfield lad. He was an avid Mansfield Town supporter and followed the Stags from a young age. He also supported Manchester United - an unprecedented mix. He also enjoyed rugby, socialising with friends, and TV sports especially darts.

Lieutenant Colonel Rob Thomson, CO 2 Rifles Battle Group North, said:

"Rifleman Sheldon was one of those 'rocks' in my Fire Support Groups. Deeply experienced on operations and in life, he was an outstanding role model to all of us who count it a privilege to have served alongside him. He was a master of his trade and, like his brother Riflemen, he was thriving here in North Helmand; he was at the very forefront of his Company's operations to make a difference for the people of Afghanistan. One of what I call my 'Mansfield gang', he was not a noisy Rifleman like

some but there was an enviable depth and maturity to his character, which drew Riflemen of all ranks to him.

"He is sorely missed. But I know that our grief is nothing compared to that which his devoted parents and sister will be enduring. They are firmly front and centre of our thoughts and prayers at this unimaginably difficult time. His fellow Riflemen are back in action and I know that Rifleman Sheldon, such was his commitment, would have been the first to order the Bugle Major to 'Sound the Advance'".

Maj Iain Moodie, OC B Coy, 2 Rifles, said :

"Rifleman Sheldon, although new to B Company, arrived back as an old friend to the Battalion and quickly settled in. His quiet, self-effacing manner and cheeky grin often masked his maturity, experience and wisdom, but never his dry sense of humour. He was a hugely experienced Rifleman - in support weapons, as a driver and in life. He slipped back into soldiering naturally after his short stint in 'civvie street', as if he was back home. He relished the challenge of operating in Afghanistan and loved being surrounded by fellow Riflemen.

"He was a hugely competent and experienced driver, as well as a Machine Gunner when on foot. His calmness under pressure and steady hand was always welcome to the more junior members of the Company. His quick and dry wit underpinned everything and it was always great fun to be in his presence. No matter what the rank, a quick-fire ribbing and a big grin was always the approach from him.

"We are all grieving in FOB Inkerman with him gone - we have lost a brother. But what we are feeling, we know, is nothing compared to that which his family are going through. Our thoughts and prayers are with his parents and sister during this tragic time. Tomorrow we will go on with our mission, mindful of our tragic loss, but galvanised to do the job we have been sent here to do. We do this with the knowledge that Shelly would have wanted it no other way".

CSjt Bell FSG 2IC, B Coy, 2 Rifles, said :

"I was very fortunate to serve with Shelly on Op TELIC 2 in Iraq. He was an excellent soldier who relished the challenge of operations, surrounded by his mates. He left the Army but soon re-enlisted, and, fortunately for us, civvie-street did not remove his dry sense of humour. Shelly was great for keeping up morale with his dry sense of humour and he was never shy of cracking jokes. In addition to his quick wit, he was very quick to get to work and understood the seriousness of our job. His experience meant that he was an 'old hand' and his judgement and common-sense approach was respected by all. His death has come as a massive blow to the Platoon. We all grieve the death of a great friend, a soldier but, more so, a brother Rifleman.

"Once a Rifleman, always a Rifleman - Swift and Bold".

Second Lieutenant Tom Parry, Platoon Commander, B Coy, 2 Rifles, said:

"Rifleman Sheldon was a much loved member of the Fire Support Platoon. He was a professional soldier and team player. Shelly had seen operational experience in Sierra Leone, Northern Ireland, Kosovo, Iraq and most recently in FOB Inkerman, Afghanistan. His experience and sense of humour rubbed off on those within the platoon and he could always be depended upon to get the job done. Rifleman Sheldon was a strong member of Two Section, carrying the Light Machine Gun for many hours on numerous patrols into the Green Zone. He was called on for his Jackal driving experience when out on desert patrols. I remember teasing Shelly as he was preparing the vehicle for patrol and he always had some banter to throw back.

"Rifleman Sheldon was a friend to me, and considered a best friend by many of the men of the FSG. He will be sorely missed but never forgotten. Swift and Bold".

Cpl Williams, Section Commander, FSG, B Coy, 2 Rifles:

"The tragic and untimely death of Rifleman Sheldon has left a hole in our section which cannot be replaced, either as a man or as a soldier. Intelligent, quick-witted and highly capable, Shelly was equally loved and respected throughout the platoon. His abilities, character and willingness to laugh at the absurdities of life, made him a joy to serve with and means that he will be deeply missed by us all. Our thoughts and prayers go out to his family at this difficult time".

Rfn Baleisuva, FSG, B Coy, 2 Rifles said : "Rifleman Sheldon was a very good and kind person to know. He always made everyone laugh and, no matter how hard the times, he always saw the funny side of it. We often had a can of pop after a patrol and talked about life out here. Everyone who was on the ground with him is affected by his death and we did all we could to get him out safely into more qualified care. I still have his can of pop. Shelly, we will always remember you and remember that you are a Chosen Man. God Bless you".

'Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.' Psalm 150:6

Capt Al Davis, B Company, 2 Rifles, said:

"For the short period I knew Rifleman Sheldon he was a quiet, considered but a whole-hearted soldier. He was extremely popular within the platoon due to his selfless loyalty and cheerful temperament in all that he did. He was utterly dependable whatever the task and relished the new challenge of becoming a JACKAL driver prior to deploying with B Company on Op HERRICK 10. It was a role for which he showed great aptitude and understanding. Never overtly ambitious, a reflection of his gentle nature, he embodied the commitment and steadfast maturity of a senior Rifleman within the Fire Support Group. Rifleman Sheldon was his own man, true to the ethos of our Regiment where individual thought is praised and greatly encouraged. He will be forever remembered as a devoted and loyal son to a loving Platoon and Regiment. Our thoughts and prayers now rest with his family back home".

Corporal Sean Binnie

The Black Watch, 3rd Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland

Cpl Binnie joined the Army in 2003. Following basic training he joined his battalion in Warminster and moved with them to Belfast at the end of 2005, taking part in the operation to close down British Army bases in the province. He served with his battalion in both Iraq and the Falkland Islands. Cpl Binnie passed the arduous Section Commanders' Battle Course last year and took command of his section in time to deploy on Operation HERRICK in Afghanistan in March, living and working amongst the Afghan troops.

Cpl Binnie was an enthusiast by nature, with a strong, determined streak not always seen in one so young. He loved his job and was always the first to volunteer for extra courses - often doing them during leave as he claimed that otherwise he simply got bored. He was very much his own man but also a team player, which made him an excellent JNCO (Junior Non-Commissioned Officer). He was very robust, both mentally and physically, and carried others along with his force of personality. He also had a great sense of humour and could laugh at himself as well as with others.

Corporal Binnie's wife, Amanda, said:

"My husband, my hero - you have been so strong and brave. Our married life has been a short six months and I'm speaking for both of us in saying it was the best six months ever.

"I know you have died a happy married man in doing what you loved. We're so proud of you. God bless you babe. Your loving wife, Amanda Binnie."

Corporal Binnie's mother, Janette, said:

"We are devastated at the loss of our son, Sean. We are very proud of him and he will be missed always. Sleep tight."

Lieutenant Colonel Stephen Cartwright, Commanding Officer of The Black Watch, 3rd Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland (3 SCOTS), said:

"Corporal Sean Binnie has given his life in service of others in the career that he loved. He died in the defence of his friends and his comrades in the Afghan National Army.

"His death is a great blow for everyone in The Black Watch, 3rd Battalion of The Royal Regiment of Scotland, but particularly for Delta Company who he was serving with in Musa Qaleh. He was part of a small team bound together by trust and self-respect, built up over their arduous training in the last year and in their first months here in Afghanistan.

"Recently promoted and very much a career soldier with a great future ahead of him, Sean was full of life, always cheerful, and a loyal JNCO; he will be missed by us all but will not be forgotten. His loss will further serve to stiffen our resolve to see our task through this summer and we will not fail him. Our deepest condolences and prayers go to Amanda, his wife, and his extended family at this most tragic time."

Lieutenant Colonel Simon Banton, Commanding Officer of the Operational Mentoring and Liaison Battle Group, said:

"Corporal Sean Binnie had been working with the Operational Mentoring and Liaison Battle Group responsible for the development of Afghan soldiers fighting alongside British soldiers to provide security for the Afghanistan people in Helmand province.

"This role is unique and requires a special type of soldier to cope with the stresses and strains this employment throws up; Sean was one of those special soldiers. At every moment he displayed professionalism and purpose. He was calm under fire and dedicated to the soldiers in his team. He readily accepted the challenges of developing and fighting alongside the Afghan Warriors and approached the task with patience and good humour.

"He was a very talented soldier who at 22 had already completed the arduous Section Commanders' Battle Course and been promoted to Corporal. His toughness and selfless behaviour was admired and respected by all that met and worked with him.

"It was no surprise that when Sean was taken from us he was leading from the front, setting the example and taking the fight to the enemy. We will remember his bravery and that he had the mental strength and physical courage to take the difficult decisions and walk the hardest path. His wife, Amanda, will be distraught at her loss. We share her grief."

Major Angus Philp, Officer Commanding Delta (Light) Company, said:

"I remember very clearly first meeting Corporal Sean Binnie during my tenure as his Company Commander. We were hill-walking during an Adventurous Training Camp in 2007, and his physical strength and enthusiasm stood out all week.

"He was obviously a young man with a mature head on his shoulders, who had ambition, resolve and energy. He loved his work and he was going to do his best to make the most of his chosen career.

"He volunteered for numerous courses and excelled on all of them, most recently the arduous Section Commanders' Battle Course in Brecon. However, it was far from being a case of all work and no play. Sean was a sociable man with a deprecating sense of humour and a wide circle of friends. His soldiers liked him, but they also respected him - as we all did.

"The manner of his tragic death was typical of the man. The ANA he was mentoring were in trouble and, with no thought for his own safety, he went forward to engage the enemy and get his comrades out of danger.

"It was an act of great courage and selflessness, in the finest traditions of The Black Watch Battalion, but no less remarkable for that and for which he made the ultimate sacrifice. I feel privileged to have known him and served alongside him. All our thoughts are now with his wife Amanda and the rest of his family during this difficult time."

His Company Sergeant Major, Warrant Officer Class 2 Scott Shaw, said:

"The first time I got to know Corporal Sean Binnie was upon taking over the company as Sergeant Major. He was one of the company physical training instructors and one of the characters within the company.

"He was respected by all ranks and had many friends within and outside the company. Sean led from the front and his troops trusted him and would follow him to the ends of the earth. Sean will be sorely missed by myself and all the members of the company. All our thoughts are with his wife and family; we will always remember him."

His Platoon Commander, Captain Olly Lever, said:

"Corporal Sean Binnie was a fine man; he typified every possible characteristic a soldier should have. Brave, determined and totally selfless, he was an individual of the highest calibre.

"Corporal Binnie was a strong willed NCO [Non-Commissioned Officer] and he had his sights set firmly on the top; second best just wasn't good enough. He died as he lived in the thick of the action and totally committed.

"Corporal Binnie also however had a softer side. He was truly devoted to his wife and his family circle; he spoke of little else. Corporal Binnie will be remembered as a hero by all who knew him and all who had the privilege to serve shoulder to shoulder with this great man."

Captain Russell Doughty said:

"Corporal Sean Binnie was a section commander in my platoon prior to Delta Company restructuring for the OMLT [Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team] task. He was keen and very serious about soldiering, always and always striving to be better. I had constantly seen him improve. I know he was very happy to be married and my thoughts are with his wife."

Captain Tom O'Sullivan said:

"Sean was a good man, friend and husband. He was well known within the company and had lots of comrades and nicknames. Above all, he was a good bloke. We will all miss him and he will never be forgotten. All of our thoughts in AMBER 33 go out to his family and wife; we feel for you all. Our deepest sympathies and all our love."

Lance Corporal Duncan Milne said:

"Binnie was one of my closest Army friends. We were in the same platoon when I came to the battalion and we were soldiers side by side ever since. Binnie was an effortlessly good soldier, he never struggled with anything.

"The key to his soldiering ability was his unmatchable determination. Binnie and I had a healthy rivalry, competing on all fronts. We grew to be close friends through many nights out. These memories are what he was legendary for.

"Binnie was about being the best and was an inspiration to myself; he made me try harder and want to go further. I will always remember him as a brilliant commander and an even better mate."

Lance Corporal Charles Brady said:

"He was not just a soldier but a hero to the end. I am proud to say I knew him, a comrade, a friend fearless in battle, and a true leader of men. The bravest of warriors, our fallen brother Sean, RIP from all your friends in AMBER 32."

Private David 'Ned' Kelly said:

"I knew and worked with Sean Binnie for a few years. He was one of the most professional soldiers I have ever worked with, always keen to get the job done and done well. We have two things in common: our passion for chess and our bigger than average waistlines. We were pretty even on the first but I think I won the last. He was a good guy and a good soldier."

Lance Corporal Jimmy Hutton said:

"The thing that reminds me about Sean was his very sweet tooth. There was hardly a time I saw him without a packet of sweets or chocolate bars on him or in the vicinity."

Lance Corporal Sam Watt said:

"I have known Sean since AFC [Army Foundation College] Harrogate and had the pleasure to serve with him in the same platoon since we joined the battalion. I always found him to be a good friend and he could always be depended upon to lift spirits. He will be sadly missed."

Defence Secretary John Hutton said:

"Corporal Sean Binnie of The Black Watch, 3rd Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland, was

clearly an outstanding soldier - determined, enthusiastic and brave.

"I know that he was held in high regard not only by his comrades, but also by the Afghan soldiers he was training, and he died defending them. He clearly had a promising career ahead of him, and it's desperately sad that it was cut short like this. My thoughts and prayers are with his wife Amanda, his family and friends."