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<p>Private John Howard, aged 23, was born in Wellington, New Zealand, on 17 April 1987.

Having arrived in the United Kingdom he applied to join The Parachute Regiment and subsequently completed the Combat Infantryman's Course held at the Infantry Training Centre Catterick, North Yorkshire.<br /><br />On successfully passing out in November 2007, Private Howard was posted to 3rd Battalion The Parachute Regiment (3 PARA) in Colchester. On joining the battalion he was posted to B Company and deployed to Afghanistan in March 2008 on Operation HERRICK 8. During his time with 3 PARA, he deployed on exercises in the Netherlands, Norway, Kenya and the USA. Throughout this period Private Howard served with distinction and was identified by his regiment as a potential high flyer with much to offer.<br /><br />

True to form, in April 2010 he volunteered for service with the Brigade Reconnaissance Force and successfully completed the Brigade Reconnaissance Force cadre, excelling during the demanding build-up training, before deploying on Operation HERRICK 13. During this time he qualified as a sharpshooter and a team medic.<br /><br />Right from the outset of the tour he rapidly established himself as a leading personality in his section and platoon. His sense of humour and easygoing attitude made him an immensely likeable figure whose friendships with his comrades spanned both rank and age. He had been at the very forefront of all the Brigade Reconnaissance Force operations up to the point when his life was tragically taken.<br /><br />

All of those who knew Private Howard will be poorer for the loss of this engaging, compassionate and inspiring young man. He leaves behind his parents Roger and Anne, two sisters Charlotte and Isabella, and his girlfriend Sophie.</p> <p><br />Private Howard's family said:<br /><br />

"As a family we are absolutely devastated to lose our son, brother, grandson, nephew and cousin.<br /><br />"Jack was immensely proud to be both a Para and a New Zealander. He was absolutely passionate about what he was doing. He was never prepared to accept less than the best and was always striving for the next challenge. His decision to try for the Paras, which he regarded as the foremost infantry regiment in the world, reflected this drive and passion.<br /><br />"Jack came from a loving family with a long military history. He was the fourth generation of our family to serve in the military.<br /><br />"Jack was well-read and believed strongly in what he was doing. He had an understanding of the conflict he was engaged in and prepared his position robustly. However, he never let his profession detract from his innate humanity.<br /><br />"Jack died serving alongside some of the great friends he had made in the Army. He comes from a strong and loving family and we miss him dearly."<br /><br />

Lieutenant Colonel James Coates, Commanding Officer, 3rd Battalion The Parachute Regiment, said:<br /><br />"Private Jack Howard was the archetypal paratrooper. Choosing to leave behind a life in his native New Zealand, he volunteered for the challenges of service in The Parachute Regiment and rose to those challenges time and time again. Jack was selected for service with the Brigade Reconnaissance Force [BRF] of 16 Air Assault Brigade and moved across to this elite unit from 3 PARA in July of this year.<br /><br />"He had always aspired to serve in this role, very much in the vanguard of operations in Afghanistan, and he fulfilled his aspiration in spades. He was an exceptional operator and made a real impact on all those who had the pleasure to work with him. This was his second tour in Afghanistan.<br /><br />"Jack died on 5 December 2010 during an operation in the area of Zaburabad in central Helmand, which aimed to counter the local insurgent threat and bring governance and development to the area. Whilst his attachment to the BRF took him away from 3 PARA, he was and will always be part of the 3 PARA family.<br /><br />"Indeed, more recently the BRF have

served at the cutting edge of 3 PARA strike operations in Nad 'Ali district, supporting us in our task to bring security and a better life to the people of central Helmand. We have never seen so much opportunity for change in Afghanistan before and Jack's recent contribution to that change will be his lasting legacy.

"Where others might have chosen the easy option in life, Jack lived his dreams in full knowledge of the risks involved. He was a brave and utterly dependable man and a good friend to all. The regiment has lost a rising star.

"Our thoughts and prayers are with his parents Roger and Anne and family at this distressing time. We pledge to remember him always and to honour his memory in all of our actions across Helmand over the coming months and beyond. Utrinqe Paratus."

Chief of Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance (ISTAR), Lieutenant Colonel Marcus Evans, Royal Tank Regiment, said:

"It is with great sadness that the ISTAR Group in Helmand has learned of the loss of Private John Howard, who has been killed in the line of duty with the Brigade Reconnaissance Force. The BRF represents the 'tip of the spear' when it comes to intelligence collection; they operate, 'find' and fight at the nexus of the insurgency, in the most difficult areas, on our most difficult tasks.

"Private Howard was the epitome of what the best BRF soldier represents, and brought many specialist skills to the Group. His courage, professionalism and contribution to the success of this campaign will always be remembered by his many comrades, of many cap badges, in the ISTAR Group. Our thoughts are with his family."

Major Matthew Cansdale, Officer Commanding the Brigade Reconnaissance Force, said:

"Private Jack Howard was a man whose motivation and drive made him stand out from those around him. He travelled half way around the world to become a paratrooper and he revelled in the challenges he found and in the friendships he made in the regiment.

"Never prepared to accept less than the best and always striving for the next challenge, Private Howard was the consummate paratrooper and others looked up to him for motivation, guidance and for fun, as he was known for his quick-witted humour. An Emperor among Emperors.

"Ever the volunteer, it was no surprise to his friends that Private Howard chose to serve with the Brigade Reconnaissance Force as it was in his character always to tackle the next test. As expected he was performing extremely well on this his second operational tour and was a source of encouragement for others in his platoon.

"A committed British soldier, Private Howard remained a proud Kiwi and his plans were for a full and rewarding career and then to return to his homeland and to his family, who were so important to him.

"Private Howard was killed while serving alongside some of the great friends he had met in the Army and doing a job he loved and at which he excelled.

"He will be sorely missed by all and our thoughts and prayers are with his family and girlfriend Sophie, about whom he cared so much. We hope that they, like us, take some comfort from the memory of a life lived to the full and given in the service of others. We will endeavour to honour him through our continued service to a task to which he gave his all."

Major Giles Murray-Jones, Officer Commanding B Company, 3rd Battalion The Parachute Regiment, said:

"Private Jack 'Kiwi' Howard was a young and enthusiastic soldier who was always keen to face new challenges. An intelligent man of many talents, he was an accomplished signaller, gunner and rifleman. By the time I had taken command of the company, he was already a veteran of HERRICK 8 and a senior Tom, and he was never one to shy away from setting a good example to the newest soldiers.

"Volunteering for service with the Brigade Reconnaissance Force for HERRICK 13, it was remarkable how keen he was to experience soldiering of a different flavour. I distinctly remember how much he had enjoyed the pre-deployment training and that his next goal was to join the Pathfinder Platoon

after the tour. His adaptability certainly suited the more lateral approach of the BRF and he would have loved the daily trials of his new role in the field.

"B Company has lost a trusted and loyal friend; approachable, reliable, one of the boys - a bright spark. We will all sorely miss him and our thoughts are with his parents Roger and Anne, and his two sisters Charlotte and Isabella."

Captain Christopher Tilley, Officer Commanding Pathfinders, said:

"Characteristically Jack Howard sought out the most demanding of roles and had thrived in the independent nature of this unit. A proud and highly experienced paratrooper, he arrived in the BRF and immediately set the standard to which his mates aspired. Quick, bright and intuitive, he was the consummate reconnaissance soldier; proving more than equal to working at the 'broken end of the bottle' whilst on operations."

"He was an exceptional operator and made a real impact on all those who had the pleasure to work with him."

Lieutenant Colonel James Coates

"Looking to his future, he harboured a desire to attempt Pathfinder selection on his return from Afghanistan. Courageous, indefatigable, but most of all friendly and easygoing, it was precisely these qualities that would have made him the ideal candidate for Pathfinders."

"Jack's death will leave a profound and lasting effect on those of us who were fortunate enough to know him, particularly so his friends in both his parent company and 3 Platoon of the BRF. Those that are left to mourn his loss will be comforted when they remember his spirit, humour and friendship. Our thoughts and condolences go out to those who will miss him most, his parents Roger and Anne, his sisters Charlotte and Isabella, and his girlfriend Sophie. It is their loss that is greatest. 'First In'."

Captain Hugo Deed, Second-in-Command, B Company, 3rd Battalion The Parachute Regiment, said:

"Private Howard was a particularly bright and quick-witted individual. He was my Platoon Signaller on Op HERRICK 8 who was chosen, in essence, because he was very bright and articulate - very much a thinking soldier. Needless to say, he performed fantastically well. Ever curious and keen to learn more, his desire to improve his knowledge of soldiering was striking."

"Private Howard was unlucky enough to spend much of his tour by my side, and we spent many hours talking, debating and sharing stories from home. He would patiently listen to my rants and was more than happy to act as a sounding board to my frustrations. He could empathise with anyone, one of the qualities that made him such a likeable person."

"He was deeply proud to be a paratrooper - I am certain he was a great asset to the BRF. He will be remembered."

Captain Frank Reeves, Second-in-Command, Brigade Reconnaissance Force, said:

"Let me tell you about Private Jack Howard. Firstly and annoyingly he was better looking than all of us and everybody who came into contact with Jack loved him. A well-respected paratrooper, he excelled at his job - it was because of this that he was selected to be part of the specialist Brigade Reconnaissance Force."

"Jack died a warrior despite the tragic circumstances. As an excellent shot he was employed as a sharpshooter within the BRF; his platoon had already fought and overcome two enemy positions that day in which Jack played a central and vital part - we were poised to attack our third. Jack was part of the section that would lead the assault; an essential part of the team, he died doing something that he both loved and had a talent for. Always surefooted, he was steady as a rock in the heat of battle, reassuring others and deadly to the enemy."

"He had aspirations to join the Pathfinders - I have no doubt in my mind that he would have succeeded, such was the quality of Jack. It was an absolute honour to have fought alongside Jack Howard and a privilege to command him. He died a warrior in helping Afghanistan become a better place."

"Our thoughts and prayers go out to Jack's parents Roger and Anne, his sisters Charlotte and Isabella, and his girlfriend Sophie."

You'll be sorely missed Jack."<br /><br />Lieutenant Sam Whitlam, Officer Commanding 5 Platoon, B Company, 3rd Battalion The Parachute Regiment, said:<br /><br />"Private Jack 'Kiwi' Howard joined 5 Platoon, B Company, 3rd Battalion The Parachute Regiment, in November 2007. Immediately capable and likeable, he settled into the demands of battalion life easily. He deployed on Op HERRICK 8 in 2008. He had volunteered to serve with the Brigade Recce Force for Op HERRICK 13.<br /><br />"Private Jack Howard was a popular member of 5 Platoon and indeed B Company. Intelligent and diligent, he proved himself to be a highly effective member of the platoon. In testament to his versatility, during Op HERRICK 8, he was equally at home as a rifleman or as the platoon radio operator.<br /><br />"Upon returning from operations, Private Howard naturally stepped into the senior soldier role, and thus became someone junior soldiers looked up to. He was mature and confident, with humility. He was immensely proud of being a paratrooper and being a Kiwi, to the point where he tried to self-impose his own nickname 'Kiwi'! Needless to say, this was not adopted by the rest of the platoon!<br /><br />"Renowned for his quick wit and his love of a two-miler, Jack was usually involved in any mischief within the platoon. He had a natural enthusiasm for soldiering and, as such, put himself forward to serve alongside the Pathfinder Platoon.<br /><br />"On behalf of 5 Platoon, B Company, I would like to express our deepest sympathies and condolences to his family at this terrible time. He will be sorely missed by all. Jack died a paratrooper and will never be forgotten - an example to all. Rest in Peace."<br /><br />Sergeant Tom Blakey, Platoon Sergeant 3 Platoon, Brigade Reconnaissance Force said:<br /><br />"Jack was a good natured soldier with a good sense of humour. Whatever the task, he got on with it without complaining. He was proud to be a Paratrooper and was an asset to his Regiment. His tragic death was a shock to all of us and he will be sorely missed by all who knew him."<br /><br />Corporal Barry Loftus, Section Commander, 5 Platoon B Company, 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment said:<br /><br />"Private Howard was a very loyal member to the Parachute Regiment and to his home country of New Zealand. He often talked of his home life and family. He was regarded as a genuinely good bloke, and would always take great interest in what others had to say. He often talked of his Mum and Dad, and sisters back home; we are all thinking of them at this terrible time."<br /><br />Corporal Lee McDonald, Section Commander, 5 Platoon B Company, 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment said:<br /><br />"The Reg is a lesser place with your loss, mate. See you in the re-org."<br /><br />Lance Corporal Aaron Carr, Section Second In Command, 5 Platoon B Company, 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment said:<br /><br />"Jack was one of my closest friends. I remember on Op HERRICK 8, he gave himself the nickname "Kiwi" and even had a badge made; so the blokes called him everything else but "Kiwi" to his annoyance! He took the banter in typically good form and was always quick to laugh! Even though he was recently attached to the BRF, he will be remembered by 5 Platoon as one of our own, and will be greatly missed. Rest in Peace."<br /><br />Lance Corporal Ben Cunningham, Section Second In Command, 5 Platoon B Company, 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment said:<br /><br />"Jack, you're a top lad. See you again someday. AIRBORNE!"<br /><br />Lance Corporal Aidan Cleverly, Section Second In Command, 5 Platoon B Company, 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment said:<br /><br />"You are an awesome friend, Jack, and I'll never forget you. I will see you in the re-org mate."<br /><br />Private Jimmy Donnelly, 5 Platoon B Company, 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment said:<br /><br />"Jack, you fought the good fight and made the ultimate sacrifice. We will never forget you. AIRBORNE!"<br /><br />Private Andrew Corcoran, Light Machine Gunner, 5 Platoon B Company, 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment said:<br /><br />"Jack was very intelligent,

mature and had impressive general knowledge. He was often reading; we would always ask him questions, to which he would generally know the answer. I will never forget you, mate. Rest in Peace. AIRBORNE!"  
Private Chris Oliver, 5 Platoon B Company, 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment said:  
"Being a long way from home, he could often be found in the block, and was always only a phone call away for a night out. I shall miss you, mate. Rest in Peace."  
Lance Corporal Liam Cruise-Taylor, Brigade Reconnaissance Force said:  
"Rest In Peace Jack, you will never be forgotten, we will miss you very much, take care mate."  
Lance Corporal Darrol Blake, Brigade Reconnaissance Force said:  
"When Jack first came to B Company he often amused the lads with a few terms he never quite mastered, such as referring to any fieldcraft lesson as 'Bushcraft'. It also took him the best part of a year to stop calling his roll mat a 'Lilo'!"  
"He made many good friends on his arrival to the BRF and also leaves a huge hole in B Company, 3 PARA. A friend to anyone, especially Aaron Carr and Sam Horsefall, by whom he will be sorely missed."  
Private Martin Graham, Brigade Reconnaissance Force said:  
"You'll never be forgotten Jack. You were always the centre of morale, turning even the dullest moment into a giggle. In our thoughts and hearts forever, take care mate."  
Sapper Jack Doherty, Brigade Reconnaissance Force said:  
"Rest In Peace Jack mate, I'll never forget the longest Jagertrain of my life in Newquay! Miss you mate, even if your PRR crack is gash! Much love ♦ Jack."  
Private Eddie Page, Brigade Reconnaissance Force said:  
"Jack was a truly mega bloke who wore his beret and Regimental tattoo with pride. He was an awesome friend and will be truly missed by all. We had some great times that will never be forgotten. With his dodgy Kiwi accent he could always make me laugh even when he didn't mean to. He was a great bloke, both in and out of work and always up for a good crack. He was a true Paratrooper. Every man an Emperor."  
Lance Corporal Joe Ryan, Brigade Reconnaissance Force said:  
"Jack Howard loved his job and was always very proud of what he had achieved. All of my memories of Jack make me smile; he was always good for morale and a truly good friend. Never forgotten brother."  
Lance Corporal Dave Lapping, Brigade Reconnaissance Force said:  
"Jack Howard was a good soldier and friend, I will miss his personality and sense of humour. My heart goes out to his family and all those who were lucky enough to know him."  
Lance Corporal Kierin Bristow, Brigade Reconnaissance Force said:  
"Jack was always up for a laugh and always quick with his witty comments. I didn't know him for very long, but he has made a lasting impression."  
Private Eddy Bolland, Brigade Reconnaissance Force said:  
"Jack was a good lad. He always had a smile on his face and made others smile too. He will be missed greatly by all."  
Corporal Mickey Mooney, Brigade Reconnaissance Force said:  
"Jack was a proper lad; always a bit of a joker and one to make the boys smile. He is sorely missed. Rest in peace my friend."  
Lance Corporal 'Canada' Morgan, Brigade Reconnaissance Force said:  
"Jack was a good soldier and a good mate. He was always up for a laugh."  
Lance Corporal 'Hodgy' Hodgkins, Brigade Reconnaissance Force said:  
"Funny bloke. Great Paratrooper. Going to miss you mate."  
Gunner Andy Cousins, Brigade Reconnaissance Force said:  
"Jack was always someone I looked up to. He was easy to talk to and always gave good advice. I'm going to miss him."  
Corporal Dan Burfoot, Brigade Reconnaissance Force said:  
"Mega bloke, mega soldier. A massive loss to everyone who knew him. Rest in peace."  
Lance Corporal Jim Appelt, Brigade Reconnaissance Force said:  
"Jack and I were talking on stag on the evening of 4th

Dec about the future and what we wanted to do in life. He was an ambitious guy who wanted to return and jump with the Red Devils and then train in New Zealand before attempting the PF cadre, which I have no doubt he would have passed. He will be greatly missed in our Section and in the BRF."<br /><br />The Soldiers of the Brigade Reconnaissance Force said:<br /><br />"Yesterday was a dark day for anyone who had the pleasure of meeting you and we feel privileged to be able to have fought alongside you and honoured to call you our friend. Our hearts go out to your family and friends and we will always remember you.<br /><br />"Jack Howard was never average; he was a great friend, beloved son, had a lovely personality and was always up for a laugh. He was a proud Paratrooper, always keen and always wanting the best. He lit the place up and everyone will have their own fond memories of Jack. Rest in Peace."</p>