

Private Robert Laws
2nd Battalion The Mercian Regiment

Private Robert Laws, aged 18, joined 2nd Battalion The Mercian Regiment (Worcesters and Foresters) [2 MERCIAN] during Op HERRICK 10. His basic training started at the Army Foundation College, Harrogate, which prepares young men for the rigours of the Infantry Training Centre in Catterick. After completing the Combat Infantryman's Course in March of this year he passed off the square at Catterick and deployed to Helmand province to join B Company.

Known to friends as Robbie, Private Laws was killed alongside his mates in B Company while they were operating under command of The Light Dragoons Battle Group during Operation PANCHAI PALANG.

Private Laws, from Bromsgrove in Worcestershire, was a popular member of his platoon during training and achieved 'Best Shot' on the Light Machine Gun. When Robbie arrived at 2 MERCIAN he quickly became known for his mischievous sense of humour and a cheeky wit which endeared him well to his Platoon Sergeant.

To undertake basic training and be on the front line in Afghanistan within a year is a tremendous undertaking, especially for someone who is 18 years old. Private Laws rose to this challenge by embracing all the best qualities of being a soldier: ability to adapt and learn; strength of character; and determination.

Lieutenant Colonel Simon Banton, Commanding Officer of 2nd Battalion The Mercian Regiment (Worcesters and Foresters), said:

"Robbie only joined 2 MERCIAN (Worcesters and Foresters) a very short time ago but had already begun to make his mark. He was excited and eager to deploy to Afghanistan and this only a few days after his 18th birthday.

"He was a warm and cheerful young man who mucked in when there was work to be done and quickly made friends. Robbie's falling has taken a good soldier from us; a man who was not afraid to move forward, endure hardship, and he had the courage to fight the enemy alongside his brothers.

"Robbie died alongside his mates in B Company, 2 MERCIAN, and his death has rocked them - they will hold him in their hearts as they fight on. The entire regiment's prayers are with Robbie's family who are devastated by his loss."

Lieutenant Colonel Gus Fair, Commanding Officer, The Light Dragoons Battle Group, said:

"Private Laws had only been in the Battle Group a short time, but had already made an impression on his company as a bright, keen and enthusiastic soldier. He died going forward, taking the fight to the enemy and helping to free the local population from the tyranny of the insurgents. His loss is felt deeply through the whole Battle Group, and we will ensure that he is not forgotten."

Sergeant Major Paul Muckle, the B Company Sergeant Major, said:

"Private Robbie Laws joined B Company on the front line south of Garmsir, a town in Helmand province. From the outset he settled well into the platoon and became known for his mischievous sense of humour. Robbie showed great potential during his short time with B Company. My thoughts go out to his family and friends at this very sad and difficult time."

Major Richard Johnson, Officer Commanding Anzio Company, Infantry Training Centre Catterick, said:

"Private Laws developed noticeably throughout his time with Anzio Company. Although initially of a quiet nature he became popular and influential with his platoon as his ability developed. Excelling in shooting for a soldier of a slight build, he was commended for achieving the award of 'Best Shot' on the Light Machine Gun.

"Robbie used to make the section laugh; whether it was him sleeping all the time, his giddy sense of humour or his random taste in music."

Private Daniel Eaglesfield, fellow MERCIAN soldier from battalion and recruit training, said:

"Private Robert 'Robbie' Laws and I both joined the 2 MERCIAN after completing training at Army Training Regiment, Harrogate, and the Infantry Training Centre, Catterick. We deployed on Op HERRICK 10 on 11th May both not knowing quite what to expect. Robbie enjoyed his snooker and swimming.

"We used to talk a lot about our girlfriends back at home and how much we loved them; he was planning to take his girlfriend to Paris when the tour was over.

"Robbie was like a brother to me and we always looked out for each other, we shared many stories and laughter together. I will never forget the smile he always had on his face. Robbie, you were a pleasure to train and work alongside and I am proud to say you were my friend. My heart goes out to your family, friends and that beautiful girlfriend of yours. May you rest in peace Robert Laws."

Private Jacob Cherry, fellow MERCIAN soldier and friend from training, said:

"I first met Robbie when we were both at Army Foundation College, Harrogate. Our friendship grew even closer when we found out we were going to the same regiment and then the same battalion.

"Robbie was a great person to be around and certainly one of a kind. As we progressed through training we ended up in the same section and the same room. In the ten weeks we spent together there was some easy times and some hard times, but we overcame them. Robbie used to make the section laugh; whether it was him sleeping all the time, his giddy sense of humour or his random taste in music.

"As our time finished at Catterick we moved on to join the battalion. Robert and I, together with another close friend Daniel, bonded as three in a huge way. We had some fun times and we were good mates and he will be deeply missed. I send my deepest sympathies to his family and friends at home. I am very sorry."

Trooper Curtis Clifton, a childhood friend serving with The Light Dragoons, said:

"I remember when Robbie was seven years old. He was stood in the school playground by himself, a small shy lad reading a book. We became very good friends. We did everything together. We decided to join our local swimming team at the age of 13 and from then on you could see that he was a talented swimmer.

"At the age of 16 we both went to the Army Foundation Centre in Harrogate and went on a trip to Malta with the army swimming team. My best memory of him has to be when we both brought Hallowe'en masks and went around Sliema in Malta asking people for pictures with them. Robbie was a true friend. He would always put his family and friends before himself even if that meant him going without or getting himself into trouble."