4th Battalion The Rifles

It is with deep regret that the Ministry of Defence has confirmed the death of Rifleman Peter Aldridge of 4th Battalion The Rifles, in Afghanistan on Friday 22 January 2010.
Rifleman Aldridge, 4th Battalion The Rifles

Rifleman Aldridge, a soldier from A Company 4 RIFLES, serving as part of 3 RIFLES Battle Group, was killed by an explosion near Sangin in Helmand Province. He was on a foot patrol, part of a larger operation to provide security for the local population in Sangin, when the explosion happened.

Lieutenant Colonel Rupert Jones, Commanding Officer 4 RIFLES, said
"Rifleman Peter Aldridge was just 19 – still very much a young man, but having gone to the Army's Foundation College in 2006, he had a great deal of experience despite his young age. Indeed he was one of the longer serving Riflemen in his platoon having joined their band almost 2 years ago.

"He made a mark from the outset and was already one of the natural leaders in his platoon. The less experienced Riflemen respected and looked up to him as a role model. He was genuinely dedicated to being a Rifleman and took great pride from it. Looking the part was important to him and he spent plenty of money on making sure that he did.

"He fully embraced The Rifles mantra to be a Thinking Rifleman and was never backward in asking 'why'. Indeed, he will be remembered affectionately for having something to say about most things. He was always in the thick of events and being such a central character in the platoon, he was a regular subject for their jokes. This only encouraged him more as he was a man with a great sense of humour and an infectious ability to laugh at himself.

"It was clear from when he first arrived in the Battalion that he was more comfortable in the field than in barracks and in Afghanistan his character really came to the fore. Early in the tour he was his Platoon Serjeant's wingman as the 60mm mortarman, but later took over as a section lead man. There is no lonelier task and it demands real depth of courage and selflessness. Rifleman Aldridge had plenty of both. Deeply loyal to his brother Riflemen and with maturity beyond his years, he volunteered for the task after his predecessor was killed.

"Rifleman Aldridge's section has had a particularly tough tour and his loss is a cruel blow to them, but also to all who knew him. The most fitting testimony that can be paid to him is that we all continue the task on which he died – he would want nothing less. All his brother Riflemen in 4 RIFLES salute him.

"His loss will be a devastating blow to his family and loved ones; our thoughts are with them. The last thing Rifleman Aldridge said to the medic treating him at the scene was to tell his

mother that he loved her."

Lieutenant Colonel Nick Kitson, Commanding Officer 3 RIFLES Battle Group, said:

"This Battle Group mourns the loss of Rifleman Peter Aldridge, a great soldier and a true companion. So cruelly taken in his prime, having proven himself time and time again in the toughest of fights out here, he leaves us just as his promising military career was really getting underway. He has been at the forefront of a fierce, complex and highly taxing battle to provide security to an oppressed people, living in constant fear of abuse and intimidation by a ruthless, ignorant and self-centred enemy.

"Rifleman Aldridge's commitment and selfless determination has been exemplary throughout and stands as a shining testament to his memory, which we now honour. He was a Rifleman of the highest quality and a true individual – a man in which our whole regiment can take great pride. The loss of one so young and promising is a real blow. But it serves only to redouble our determination to continue his fine work, spurred on by the inspiration of his selfless sacrifice.

"The thoughts of every member of the 3 Rifles Battle Group are with his family, friends and loved ones. We pray that they, like us, may find comfort in his memory and draw strength from the example that he set in life."

Major Richard Streatfeild, Officer Commanding, A Company 4 RIFLES, said:
"Rifleman Peter Aldridge was a mighty fine Rifleman. He had joined the Army straight from school and trained for a year at the Army Foundation College in Harrogate . He had brains as well as brawn. Fit, strong and brave he gave his life trying to make sure that the path was safe for his section. He had been trained in specialist weapons. He wanted to be a Sniper. Like all those who had been trained and educated at the College he was a future leader. He aspired to be a section commander.

"He will be sorely missed, and the Army will be much the poorer for the passing of his talent. But it will be his family and friends that will feel his loss most deeply and our thoughts are with them. He had all the qualities of a true Rifleman. He held no fear of rank; admirably direct; an appetite for adventure; a quick tongue; an easy laugh and broad shoulders. I have enjoyed his company on adventure training tearing down a Welsh hillside on a mountain bike and on operations over a brew putting Afghanistan to rights.

"On operations he carried the fight to the enemy but was mature enough to understand the requirements for restraint. In England he shared his room with his mountain bike and all his extra kit. He was always to be found at the front. Trusted by his superiors and his peers in situations where only those with his qualities can be trusted. We trusted him and he would now trust us to live up to his example."

Captain Benedict Shuttleworth, Company Second in Command, said:
"Rifleman Aldridge's death comes as a deep shock. He was one of the real characters of not only 1 Platoon but of A Company as a whole. Already a senior Rifleman in a fairly young platoon, Rifleman Aldridge's maturity beyond his years meant that he was close to both the

senior ranks and his fellow Riflemen.

"He was a very professional soldier who understood the value of training and rehearsals at the lowest level. He could often be found in camp practising his drills or trying out new fire positions. Just like all the best Riflemen in the ages before him, Rifleman Aldridge was not afraid to ask the question "why?", though his loyalty to his chain of command was never in question."

Lieutenant Michael Holden, 1 Platoon Commander, said:
"Rifleman Aldridge is an example of what we expect of fellow Riflemen; strong in nature and kind in heart. He was a real character amongst the platoon. During pre-deployment training he really began to show his true potential even though he was still very young. He showed maturity and knowledge that you would expect from a senior Rifleman.

"However Rifleman Aldridge was guilty of one thing - that was selective hearing. This phenomenon used to land him regularly in the Platoon Serjeant's "wanted book", despite this he was one of the most genuine guys I have met and he would show true kindness to all who came across his path.

"Rifleman Aldridge was a very strong individual, which he proved on many occasions. On one particular occasion he joined Rifleman Spencer in the 'Infamous Iron man' competition. Never wanting to accept second best he would be seen racing around the perimeter of the patrol base with two full jerry cans. Rifleman Aldridge particularly enjoyed martial arts and mountain biking and I had many a conversation with him about rugby, which he assured me he wanted to take up on return from Afghanistan .

"The fondest memories I have of Rifleman Aldridge is a conversation I had with him in one of our many random chats putting the world to rights, when he tried to convince me that his fear of spiders had been passed down through many generations. The origins of which apparently were born in pre-historic times when spiders were larger than humans!

"Rifleman Pete Aldridge will be sorely missed. The comfort I can take from his loss is that he loved his job, had so far enjoyed every moment of his time in Afghanistan , and had showed what a fantastic soldier and person he was. He will never leave the Platoon's thoughts and hearts, and prayers go out to his family and friends at this time."

Warrant Officer Class 2 (RQMS), Gary Case, added:
"When Rifleman Aldridge joined A Company I could see that he was a determined young man with a lot of prospect. He was young, fit, with a great attitude knowing exactly what he wanted to do in life. It was clear to me from the start that he wanted to be a soldier of the highest possible standard. He was your typical Rifleman; if there was something going on in the Company you could be sure that Rifleman Aldridge (Aldo as was my nick name for him) wouldn't be far from the bottom of it.

"He was a true Rifleman he always had something to say (not always the right thing) and always wanted not just him but everyone around him to do well. He had a great Regimental

sprit, a young man that you could rely on to set the standards for new Rifleman arriving in the Battalion.

"If there was a need for a chosen man and someone to lead then he would be at the top of my list, he was a man to watch for in the future. He was a massive supporter for the Company and Battalion in sport, Rugby was his game and he did like a tackle. One of his goals was to represent the battalion at Rugby on his return from Afghanistan . The regiment has lost a son, I have lost a brother. Aldo you were and always will be a legend, sleep sound 'Swift and Bold'."

Warrant Officer Class 2 (CSM), Pat Hyde, said:
"Rifleman Pete Aldridge was the sort of Rifleman that would let nothing stand in his way, always up for and up to, the challenge, a real asset to his platoon and company. His true character started to show through while preparing for the tour; honest, generous and courageous but most of all a real team player especially for 1 Platoon. Rifleman Aldridge was truly army barmy and loved nothing more than reading and talking about the military his real lust for everything military was truly fulfilled in Afghanistan.

"He will be sorely missed by all those that knew him, our thoughts are with his family and friends in this very difficult time, A Company 4 Rifles have lost a very dear friend."

Serjeant Ross Jones, 1 Platoon Serjeant, paid this tribute:
"I have known Rifleman Aldridge for just under a year now and have watched him grow from a shy timid rifleman to a confident and dependable one. Rifleman Aldridge has always been a colourful character within the platoon and was never far away from mischief and extremely bad at hiding it, with his cheeky grin always giving the game away. After putting him straight I would always have a sly giggle in private or with the boss at his latest exploits... a true rifleman. Rifleman Aldridge was an excellent soldier and projected himself as a natural professional.

"On Operations he was in his element, acute senses and ready for anything, and when we got back he was always seen squaring away his kit ready for the next thing before hitting the gym. If there was something to be done he would do it to the best of his ability and if there any criticism given he would take it on board and learn from it. He definitely had a bright future ahead of him, he always tried extremely hard and was 100% devoted to his platoon, the Regiment and the Army as a whole.

"He was always keen to put himself forward to the more important jobs and when Rifleman Basset was killed, he was first to put himself up to take over his job as lead man and was seen practising over and over in the made up training area perfecting his skills at finding IEDs.

"Rifleman Aldridge was not all about the army and was eager to share with me about his family back home and his girlfriend who he cared a lot about. If there was something on his mind he would always seek advice and hated keeping things build up in his mind. He cared a lot about what people thought of him but he was not short of friends. He even managed to start a few friendships among the American Marines on our RSOI package.

"Rifleman Aldridge was an absolutely great bloke and brought a lot of joy to the platoon. He will

be missed especially by me. My thoughts and prayers go out to his family and his girlfriend who he leaves behind."

Lance Corporal Paul Sapsford said:
"Rifleman Pete Aldridge or "Fat back" as he was affectionately known was the epitome of a true Rifleman. Both loved and opinionated, but most of all a true professional. Amazingly capable he showed no fear leading the section through tough and dangerous terrain, and for that I will always be truly thankful. I found a true friend in Peter and he will be sorely missed by the Platoon, Company and Battalion. R.I.P. Swift and Bold."

Rifleman Craig Hitchins said:
"Aldridge was known to most of us as "fatback". He was a bloke full of emotion, who had time for anyone. Fatback would spend most of his time on camp either spray-painting his kit or with his girlfriend. One story has always stuck in my mind about him, from when we spent a long cold night on a lurk, with little warm kit and the odd shower of rain. Neither of us could get any sleep until he turned to me and asked me if we could spoon! Very quickly we were spooning and fighting for the comfy ground. When first light broke he woke me up and whispered, "Everyone is looking at us!" I opened my eyes to find our platoon staring and sniggering. The banter very quickly started. Fatback was a key member of the platoon who will be dearly missed."

Rifleman Chris Turvey said of him:
"Pete Aldridge was a good mate of mine. He was one of the first people to talk to me when I got to Battalion. He was a funny, kind person and, the same as most soldiers, liked a good moan. He liked looking different in every way, and that's what I will remember most about Peter. He was just a brilliant soldier and will be remembered by everyone."

Rifleman Richard Reading said:
"Peter was an awesome individual and an amazing Rifleman. He was so devoted to his job and fellow Riflemen brothers. Peter was one of the keenest Riflemen I knew, his kit was always as 'ally' as it could possibly be and he never seemed to switch off from being a Rifleman.

"Peter was a fun, witty guy who used to have a laugh and joke with everyone. He, like all Riflemen, loved a good moan. I remember was I was on driver training with Peter, we were learning to drive for free on the Army and we were getting out of boring Company training. So it was all a bonus, yet Pete seemed to moan like mad - LOL. He was a Rifleman through and through. I would use only three words to sum up Pete - funny, cheeky and most of all 'ALLY!' Swift and Bold."

Rifleman Stephen Preece said:
"Pete loved his job and loved spending all his money on kit to make himself look ally as you like. All he talked about was getting home to his girlfriend and family. He was not far away from his camera always taking pictures of himself. Nothing fazed him always up for a challenge. True friend now and forever, will be sadly missed RIP mate Swift and Bold."

Rifleman Vayani Mnguni added:

"I knew 'Aldrey' for about a year before tour, we got on really well, but I must admit he did bite and snap easily, but always gave as good as he got. Life goes on but it's hard to take this in. RIP Brothers in Arms, 1 Platoon for Life."

Rifleman Reece Terry recalled:
"I met Pete when I first moved to 1 Platoon. Pete was a lively character and always took pride in his appearance. He called it looking 'ally'. I got a lot closer to Pete when we were at FOB INKERMAN. We started talking a lot about things we were going to do when we had finished this tour. Pete said he couldn't wait to get back and get a house with his girlfriend. He said it was going to be awesome. He was going to have his own chair and everything.

"Pete always used to speak his mind and was a top lad. Always made people laugh if they were down and if you were in a bad mood you could always rely on Pete to cheer you up. Pete spoke lots about his girlfriend about how much he missed her and how much he loved her. He was an outstanding rifleman and I am proud to say I served with him in Afghanistan . He will be sadly missed. Swift and Bold forever."

Corporal Kevin Baglin said:
"I didn't really know Pete that well, but in the month of working with him we became friends. He was part of my section and I enjoyed working with him. He will be missed by me and all of 41 Delta 'rogue' section as he called it. Myself and Pete had a few good chats together, as he was my room mate in PB Bari. He was the story-teller of the section and that man could tell a story- actually he never shut up, the loud one of the section. He was known as Fatback.

"Also every time you looked at him he would make you laugh. We used to watch films at night together and most of the time he would watch it just to get some of my heater. I think when Pete put his mind to it he was one of the best Rifleman in the platoon but sometime he didn't know when to talk or shut up- but that was just Pete. And if he wasn't talking, telling a joke or telling a story then he was asking for something.

"Pete used to talk about his girlfriend a lot. He loved her and wanted to marry her someday. The lads said they made the perfect match. Pete was liked by most people and everyone will remember him. The platoon will miss you brother. Swift and Bold."

Lance Corporal Jodie Hill, Company Medic described him:
"Rifleman Aldridge was a true friend. He was funny and always wearing a smile. Truly soft at heart. He is missed by all of us. We are very proud to have been his friends and even prouder to have served alongside such an excellent soldier. Rest in peace my friend."

Corporal John Dalton said
"Pete was a big strong lad, mad as hell. His version of religion relating to aliens will always make me smile. A big softie at heart. God bless."

Rifleman Rob (Bertie) Shaw said:
"Pete didn't have a bad bone in his body, He always meant well and made light of any situation. His sense of humour was loud and he was a real asset to the platoon. In both senses his

keenness and eagerness to learn about anything infantry was infectious. I will always remember Pete for these reasons and for the random things he used to buy. According to Pete, looking good was half the battle. My thoughts go out to his family and his girlfriend, Jem, as they were always in conversation."

Corporal Mark Charlton said:
"As a Rifleman, he was becoming one of the best. He always wanted to be better and enjoyed learning new skills and improving the ones he already had. Having started the tour in the Platoon Serjeant's group he quickly adapted to the new responsibility of lead man in 2 Section after a serious incident. With confidence and maturity beyond his years - he excelled. Anyone behind him felt safe. 1 Platoon will mourn the loss of a friend and a rifleman. Sleep well my friend."

Rifleman Toby Samways said:
"Pete was one of my best mates. He always used to say that looking good was half the battle. He always had a joke to tell or a story. We had our own tent in the FOB - he kept it clean, I made it a mess. He even tried to take me to the gym - he failed on that. I am going to miss you so much, but not that stupid cat you had. Love you man. 41 Rogue forever mate."

Rifleman Charlie Foley, said:
"Pete man I don't really know what to say. When I first joined Battalion you were the first person I met along with Brownie. I am defo going to miss those times in the room, those funny times. Anyways, one good thing about you was that you were always yourself – no matter what. One thing I am not going to miss is your sulking. Pete you are a good mate and you are going to be missed very much. I am proud to have known you. Miss you mate."