Sergeant Peter Anthony Rayner was born into a military family on the 11 November 1975 in Andover. He considered his hometown to be Bradford but joined the 1st Battalion, The King's Own Royal Border Regiment in 1994; the same Battalion in which his father had served for most of his Army career.

He joined an Armoured Infantry Battalion based in Catterick, and it is in this role that Sergeant Rayner excelled. Passing a Warrior Armoured Fighting Vehicle driving cadre soon after his arrival he then deployed as a Warrior driver to Bosnia in 1997, to Macedonia in 1998 and again to Bosnia in 2000.

By this time he had been promoted to Lance Corporal and was honing his skills as an armoured infantry soldier by becoming a Regimental Instructor Gunnery, Driving and Maintenance Instructor, and Fleet Manager.

As his Regiment moved to Cyprus he stayed in Catterick with the 1st Battalion, The King's Regiment and deployed to Iraq on Operation TELIC 2, where he was employed as a Warrior Commander.

Always one to seek out a new challenge, Sergeant Rayner moved to the Anti-Tank Platoon where he completed the Milan Detachment Commander's Course. He deployed again to Iraq on Operation TELIC 9 with the newly formed 2nd Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, this time as a Warrior Sergeant with Arnhem Company.

In 2009, following an exemplary performance on the Javelin Section Commander's Course, he deployed with Arnhem Company to Afghanistan as part of the Theatre Reserve Battalion on Operation HERRICK 11. He was based out of Patrol Base Shammel Storrei, one of the most heavily attacked bases in Southern Helmand, where he performed admirably. He received the Long Service and Good Conduct Medal on his return to Cyprus.

In 2010 he once again deployed to Afghanistan with Arnhem Company as the Javelin Platoon Sergeant. His bravery and courage had attracted much praise and he had cemented a reputation as one of the best Javelin Commanders in the Army.

He will be remembered for his pre-eminence as a Javelin Commander, for his forthright manner and for his huge personality. Sergeant Rayner will be sorely missed by all members of his Company and by all members of the 2nd Battalion the Duke of Lancaster's Regiment'Lions of England'. He leaves a young family and our thoughts and prayers are with his wife Wendy and his son Derek at this time.

Sgt Rayner's wife Wendy said:

"Fantastic loving Husband and Father, Son, Son-in-law, Brother and Brother-in-law, Who loved his job and doing something which he believed in. He will be sincerely missed by all who knew him."

Sgt Rayner's Peter and Bernadette said:

"Peter was a Bradford lad and an avid Bradford city supporter. A keen mountain biker he was always full of energy and was someone who enjoyed life to the full.

"As a soldier he loved his job and was totally committed to the Army, as well as his family and friends. As a son and brother, he was a fun loving and caring person of whom we are all very proud. We loved him so dearly and will miss him with all our hearts."

Lieutenant Colonel Robbie Boyd, Commanding Officer 2nd Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment,'Lions of England' said:

"Sergeant Pete Rayner told you exactly how things were. He was honest, loyal and always vocal. A true Lion of England and a man of high morals, guts and integrity. A man who cared not just for the morale of his soldiers, but in how that morale was created. A man with great spirit and forthrightness, who was as true as his aim was with a Javelin Missile.

"Sergeant Rayner was a man who I respected as someone never afraid to ask his Commanding Officer a tough question or tell me how my soldiers were feeling. When I could squeeze a word in edgeways, I would joke with him that he was my'Shop Steward', a man whom I trusted to tell me how my soldiers were and what their concerns may be. He never let me down; always telling me the truth, always presenting a fresh opinion, always diplomatic and always underpinning our chats with his fine sense of humour.

"He gained my trust and admiration very early on, particularly for his leadership in Afghanistan, where he had proven himself on two separate tours this year. Ferocious in defence of his men and deadly with a Javelin missile, he fired as many as any operator in the Army when facing the enemy in battle. I have lost a confidante, a magnificent Javelin Missile Detachment Commander and an honourable soldier.

"The 2nd Battalion will be a quieter place without Sergeant Rayner. He was a son of the Regiment - his father had also served in our ranks - and a man with whom I shall miss joking with and sparring with intellectually. My heart bleeds for Wendy and Derek who are strong members of our Regimental family based in Cyprus and I know they will be supported by their many friends there.

"Their pain is ours and their loss is shared by us all, be it here in Afghanistan or in Cyprus. We are thinking of them as we continue our final weeks of operations in Helmand Province. We will always remember Sergeant Pete Rayner.

"England has lost one of her most respected Lions and a most sincere and trusted friend in the butts."

Major Paul Tingey, Officer Commanding Arnhem Company, 2nd Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, 'Lions of England' said:

"Sgt Rayner was fatally wounded in an improvised explosive device strike whilst he was leading his men on operations. Sergeant'Skippy' Rayner was unmistakeable with his closely shaven head and larger than life personality.

"Recently promoted to Sergeant, he came to Arnhem Company as the Javelin Section Commander. He was an absolute master of his craft and there was no better Javelin operator. He had assumed command of his multiple during the tour and was proving himself to be a natural leader.

"Sgt Rayner was known to everyone; he left a lasting impression on you after the first meeting. He loved to talk and would pass the time of day with the most junior soldier or senior officer. He spoke his mind and always had the best interests of his men at heart. He was someone that you could rely on to tell you exactly what he thought. I always welcomed his words of advice.

"It was, however, in the quieter moments where I really got to know Skippy. Always over a brew, we would often talk about our families, our animals and about the plans he had for when he got home. After his family his next passion was mountain biking. He was looking forward to getting back on his bike when he got home.

"I will remember Skippy as a devoted family man, a fanatical mountain biker and one of the best commanders that I have had the privilege to work with. His loss will leave a hole in the lives of those that knew him. I will miss our chats and I will miss you Skippy.

"My prayers are with his wife Wendy and his son Derek."

Captain Bowden–Williams, Arnhem Company Second-in-Command, 2nd Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, 'Lions of England' said:

"Sergeant Pete Rayner was a larger than life character, he had time for everybody from the youngest Kingsman to any Colonel or Brigadier that dare venture near him. Recently promoted to Sergeant he took command of his multiple with great pride.

"Always vocal in Arnhem Company and often talking of his wife, son and many dogs back home. Always laughing and always smiling he enjoyed the friendships he had made, always looking for a laugh or a chance to wind certain people up, me included.

"He was a rare breed amongst the'Lions of England'; a Yorkshireman amongst many Lancastrians. He was a proud Bradford City fan and on our previous tour of Afghanistan he would often ask for the scores on the radio when he was living in an isolated location.

"Skippy Rayner was the most professional Javelin operator I've ever met. He took great pride in the part he played with his Javelin in the defence of Shammal Storrei on Op Herrick 11 and the support he offered to the Company on this tour. We will all miss that smile, laugh and awkward

questions. Skippy, rest in peace my friend."

Captain Andy Lockwood, Arnhem Company, Fire Support Group Commander, 2nd Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, 'Lions of England' said:

"Sergeant Pete Rayner or'Skippy' as he was known, was a dedicated and professional soldier. He will be sorely missed by all of us in the Fire Support Group.

"It was a privilege to call Sergeant Rayner a colleague and friend. He will never be forgotten by anyone who served with him. His infectious good humour will be missed by us all. Skip loved being a soldier, he especially loved being a soldier in the Javelin Platoon, but his first love was his wife Wendy and son Derek. He constantly spoke of them and his love for his family was obvious for all.

"Skip will be remembered as a dedicated family man, a great soldier and a friend to all. He is a massive character and the company will be a lesser place without him."

Second Lieutenant Andy Miller, Platoon Commander, Arnhem Company, 2nd Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, 'Lions of England' said:

"Sgt Rayner and I had spent a lot of time together on this tour. Known to all as "Skippy" or "Skip" he was a keen, experienced and calm commander. Always there for a young officer like myself. He would give advice as well as he gave us help, by firing his Javelin missiles to get my soldiers and I out of trouble again and again.

"He would often talk of his family and life back in Cyprus, where he lived with his wife Wendy and his son Derek. He was a keen mountain biker and had won competitions in Cyprus; he had offered to take me out when we got back. Sergeant Rayner would often tell me about his son and how he had learned to use the Javelin missile, just like his Dad on the computer game 'Call of Duty'."

WO1 (RSM) Chris Rowlandson, Regimental Sergeant Major, 2nd Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, 'Lions of England' said:

"Although only recently promoted, Sergeant Pete Rayner was already a well known and extremely popular member of the Sergeants' Mess. A huge character and a great leader, he died doing what Sergeants do best, leading their men with guile and good humour based on his years of hard earned and hard fought experience. His loss will be felt deeply not only across my Warrant Officers' and Sergeants' Mess but also across the whole Battalion with which his family have been involved for many years; our thoughts are with his wife and son."

WO2 (CSM) Sean Pyper, Arnhem Company Sergeant Major, 2nd Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, 'Lions of England' said:

"I have worked with Skippy for both of Arnhem Company's tours and have known him from when we served together in the King's Own Royal Border Regiment. He gave everything for his lads in every way. He was a surgeon with a Javelin and proved to be an asset to the Company.

"He always talked of his family and his passion for mountain biking and how he was going to recruit members of the Battalion to form a club. He was utterly reliable and always ready to help anyone who needed it. He was looking forward to getting to know the real life within the WOs' and Sgts' Mess and we would talk of sitting in the Mess on a Friday afternoon and enjoying a beer.

"He was a character that immediately grew on you and he became a friend that I could rely on. It was an expensive loss to lose someone so dedicated to everything in life. He spoke of Wendy and Derek and how he loved them. I will always remember him with a coffee, cigarette and smile to greet you with.

"I will always remember him and my thoughts go to his family at this dark period. Skippy, you will always be remembered and never forgotten and we'll have that beer together some day, but not in this life."

Colour Sergeant Mark Rakocevic, Blenheim Company Quarter Master Sergeant, Blenheim Company, 2nd Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, 'Lions of England' said:

"My thoughts are with his family, he is a huge loss to them and us all. I have known Sgt Pete "Skippy" Rayner on and off for about 12 years throughout my army career, since the NCO cadre we did together. The thing that stood out the most about Skippy was his selflessness and the crack he had, no matter what the situation.

"He had chosen a career in the Anti Tank Platoon from when I first knew him and it was a job he excelled at. He was proud of being a member of the Anti Tank/Javelin Platoon, a solid operator at what he did. He was a strong family man and always thought of them; a characteristic we should all take from him.

"Skippy was promoted to Sergeant just before we deployed and was awarded his Long Service and Good Conduct medal. He would have been a good addition to any Mess function, as he enjoyed a few drinks like the rest of us. Our thoughts go out to his wife Wendy and son Derek at this sad time.

"God Bless Skippy."

Sergeant Chris Bland, Intelligence Sergeant, Blenheim Company, 2nd Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, 'Lions of England' said:

"Skippy was one of those blokes that would drive you wild with his knowledge, he would constantly test the lads with questions not only on the Javelin but from any pamphlet. This was not intended to put them on the spot but to help them better themselves; he always endeavoured to better himself too, he had a thirst.

"That said he also loved to get home, he was no different from any married man in this job. You have to grab every moment you can with your family, and Skippy certainly did that.

"I remember the first introduction my wife had to Wendy at a Christmas Ball in Bourlon Barracks in Catterick. Skippy and I watched in horror as the night slipped away and our wives started to slip under the table, both very worse for wear.

"Skippy was also very loving of his son Derek and would always talk about him. He could be overheard on the phone sometimes telling Derek how much he loved him and how he was to be a good boy and look after mum. Some would construe this as soppy but this was a sign of a truly loving father, and any man who is a father should take a leaf out of old Skip's book.

"He also loved his mountain bike, Christ he could talk a glass eye to sleep about it; but it would take his mind off work. Some fish, some play PC games, some walk, Skippy loved to mountain bike. He used to go away most Saturdays with Corporal Dave Turner and spend time finding new routes that would test him.

"Then he'd go again, always pushing himself to see what his limits were and without doubt he would usually be found pushing them at every opportunity. Although relentless at making sure the boys were looked after and sometimes a right pain about it, it was always for the best. I, along with all the lads in the Javelin platoon will miss him.

"God Bless Skippy and Griff."

Sergeant Kev Threlfall, Platoon Sergeant, Fire Support Group, Blenheim Company, 2nd Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, 'Lions of England' said:

"RIP mate, gone far too soon. Good night, god bless. NEC ASPERA TERRENT."

Sergeant Lea Wilkinson, Platoon Sergeant, Arnhem Company, 2nd Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, 'Lions of England' said:

"Peter was one of my good friends from our King's Own Royal Border Regiment days. I first met Peter in 1994 when he first joined the battalion, where we both where in the same Platoon. Pete, even up to his passing, always commented about our past as young soldiers and has even branded me with the name "Body Armour" for reasons many now know; he loved to tell this story to anyone who would listen.

"Peter was a professional soldier who loved to sit and exchange words about who had the most important job. Over a brew and a fag we had many debates. He was never one to back down, always wanted the last word and would always end our conversations with, "love you Wilky", and with his distinctive laugh.

"Peter was very much the family man and he loved his wife Wendy and his son Derek very much. After each phone call he would come and tell me how they both were, what they had been doing and in the same breath, try to sell me a mountain bike and convince me to come

with him when we got back to Cyprus.

"Peter was a huge personality within the Company with an infectious sense of humour, he was much loved by his Javelin Platoon. He was so proud to be in the Warrant Officers' and Sergeants' Mess and was looking forward to having a beer there with us when we got back. This was always.one of the main topics of our many daily chats.

"I will sorely miss you Pete now you are not with us and the brew area is now a lonely place without you there. My heart goes out to your wife Wendy and your son Derek in these awful times.

"Rest in peace Peter, we will never forget you."

Corporal Sean Bateson, Section Commander Arnhem Company, 2nd Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, 'Lions of England' said:

"'Skippy' was one of the keenest Anti-Tank soldiers I've ever met. He knew his job inside out. Skippy was the face of the brew area and enjoyed a good chat. My thoughts go to his family at this sad time."

Corporal Clive Morton, Recce Section Commander, Fire Support Group, Blenheim Company, 2nd Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, 'Lions of England' said:

"Skippy, what a guy – the ultimate professional and an amazingly funny guy. God truly does take the best of them. My heart goes out to your wife and family, rest in peace pal."

Corporal James Savory, Javelin Detachment Commander, Arnhem Company, 2nd Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, 'Lions of England' said:

"Pete, I will never forget the first time I met you 10 years ago with C Company in the 1st Battalion The King's Regiment. You would always be seen with a coffee and a smoke. We ran our Warrior together at times in Iraq and 7 years later we would run our Javelin Detachment together in Afghanistan.

"You were a true friend and the best Javelin Section Commander a detachment could wish for. I will never forget you mate. My thoughts are with your family at this very sad time. RIP Skippy."

Corporal David Sparks, Section Commander Arnhem Company Fire Support Group, 2nd Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, 'Lions of England' said:

"Sgt Rayner, or'Skippy' as he was best known, was one of life's true characters. I've never known a man quite as enthusiastic or devoted to the job. Anti-Tanks was the be all and end all of the Infantry according to Skippy and no one could convince him otherwise!

"Skippy was quite famous amongst the Fire Support Group for his rather erratic doom and gloom speeches which comprised of our "superior fire power" and always ended with, "you all

know me" and we did. We all knew his speeches would go on for a good hour or so, but we all listened! Skippy was always fiercely protective of his men and made every effort to help and advise anyone who approached him.

"As he always said to me, "my main priority is to get everyone back safe", and by God he meant every word of it. Already the world is a much quieter place, as there is one thing Skippy wasn't, and that's quiet. Every decision he made was for the people around him, his men and friends. That's how he saw everyone and that's equally how we saw him.

"Skippy was in constant contact with his wife and son, there wasn't a day that went by where he didn't mention them to me. But again that was Skippy, he was just immensely proud of his family and loved them dearly.

"Skippy, it was absolute pleasure serving with you, we're all going to miss you mate. My thoughts and prayers go out to his family."

Corporal Matthew Vernon, Mortar Fire Controller, Fire Support Group, Blenheim Company, 2nd Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, 'Lions of England' said:

"A true friend, always missed. God Bless."

Corporal Ryan Walton, Multiple Second in Command, Fire Support Group, Blenheim Company, 2nd Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, 'Lions of England' said:

"A fantastic fella, rest in peace, you will never be forgotten."

Lance Corporal Mikey Wilson, Husky Commander Arnhem Company, 2nd Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, 'Lions of England' said:

"Skippy, you're a true mate who always put others before yourself. You did everything with a sense of humour and a smile on your face. You will be sorely missed by all who knew you. You will never be forgotten."

Kingsman Raymond Alouch, Javelin Operator, Arnhem Company Fire Support Group, 2nd Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, 'Lions of England' said:

"I first met Skippy the week Arnhem Coy came back from Operation HERRICK 11. He was keen to know who I was on our first meeting and I found him to be a very interesting person to be around, only to be chuffed after realising he was one of my commanders.

"Skippy was a fun character but very professional at his duties, he was worthy of any task given to him. He is one of the reasons for high morale in Javelin Platoon, due to his vast knowledge of the equipment and how to operate it. As a friend he had advice on married life and I wished I had joined the Army after marriage. He was a great role model to me in my Army life.

"He loved fitness and I admired him for that. With these few weeks left to push he was looking

forward to seeing his family. I will not forget the journey we shared together and I will not forget that God giveth and he taketh away. Once a soldier you will forever be. Rest In Peace, Skippy."

Kingsman Liam Bell, Machine Gunner, Arnhem Company Fire Support Group, 2nd Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, 'Lions of England' said:

"Skippy was a good man and a great friend. No matter where he was he always had a brew and a smile, as well as a cigarette in his mouth. I will always remember the passion he had for his beloved Javelin Platoon. My thoughts are with his wife Wendy and son Derek. Rest in Peace mate, we will never forget you."

Kingsman Rudolph Burke, Javelin Operator, Fire Support Group, Blenheim Company, 2nd Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, 'Lions of England' said:

"I have known Skippy for 7 years since he joined the Javelin Platoon. We had loads of ups and downs together – I can remember on exercise on Salisbury Plain when he was my Warrior Armoured Vehicle commander; we were told to observe our arcs and he decided to move to where the next vehicle was.

"When asked why he moved he replied, "I was bored!" and that has always stuck in my mind. You will always be a true friend and commander to me. My heart goes out to your wife and son. RIP Sgt Peter "Skippy" Rayner. Gone but not forgotten."

Kingsman Michael Cleasby, Javelin Operator, Blenheim Company, 2nd Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, 'Lions of England' said:

"Sgt Rayner or "Skippy" as he was known to the lads was a funny bloke, who always had something to say. He will be sadly missed by us all in Javelin Platoon. I have known Skippy since 2007 when I joined the Battalion in Iraq and I really got to know him soon afterwards when I was posted to Javelin Platoon. We did so many exercises together and being a Kingsman I always got the short end of the stick when it came to stag! You will be deeply missed and I will never forget you."

Kingsman John Garrett, Machine Gunner, Arnhem Company Fire Support Group, 2nd Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, 'Lions of England' said:

"Whether it was sorting out diffies and exchanges or teaching the Kingsmen to make a decent'rolley', Sergeant Rayner would always be happy to help out the lads. He will be sadly missed by all the Fire Support Group, as well as everyone who knew him."

Kingsman Paul Harding, Javelin Operator, Arnhem Company Fire Support Group, 2nd Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, 'Lions of England' said:

"I never thought for one minute that I'd be writing this for you mate. It was an honour to have served alongside you. You were a top bloke and will be hugely missed but never forgotten."

Kingsman Ben Harper, Officer Commanding Arnhem Company's Signaller, 2nd Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, 'Lions of England' said:

"Sgt Rayner was the best lad around and he is going to be missed by all the lads and me. I remember the first time I met Skippy when he was a Corporal on our last tour of Afghanistan. He was a good person and my best friend around. I'll miss him and remember the food he cooked for me or the tea he used to make me when he woke me up for stag.

"Skippy was like a father to me and we shared many great times together in our Patrol Base and out of it. I'm sorry for Wendy's loss and my thoughts are with her and Derek."

Kingsman Pete Lomas, Javelin Operator, Fire Support Group, Blenheim Company, 2nd Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, 'Lions of England' said:

"A good friend, you will be sorely missed. Rest in peace."

Kingsman Watisoni Ralulu, Machine Gunner, Arnhem Company Fire Support Group, 2nd Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, 'Lions of England' said:

"He was there all the time for me and Junior since we joined the Platoon. We even refer to him as'Tata', which means Dad in Fijian. He wanted us to be in his team. We miss him and pray for his family. Rest In Peace, Skip."