

Captain Andrew Griffiths

2nd Battalion The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment (2 LANCS) Theatre Reserve Battalion

Captain Andy Griffiths was born on 3 October 1984 in Richmond, North Yorkshire. He was brought up in a military family and studied European and International Studies at Loughborough University before starting the Commissioning Course at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst in September 2007.

Whilst at Sandhurst Capt Griffiths only ever considered joining The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, known as the 'Lions of England' - his father's regiment. On completion of the Platoon Commander's Battle Course he took over command of 5 Platoon, Blenheim Company, in the 2nd Battalion based in Episkopi, Cyprus, prior to starting pre-deployment training with his battalion as the Theatre Reserve Battalion. The Theatre Reserve Battalion provides acclimatised troops over a 12-month period as the UK's high readiness operational reserve.

Capt Griffiths approached Command with characteristic humility and absolute dedication, deploying with his Platoon to Afghanistan on his first tour with great pride, through a demanding and successful deployment to Babaji during Operation Panther's Claw and latterly to Nad 'Ali.

He forged himself the strongest possible reputation; he distinguished himself with his personal courage and his duty of care for his men. On return from Helmand he moved into Dettingen (Fire Support) Company and immediately crafted his Javelin Platoon and his Fire Support Group into a well-trained, well-drilled team.

The only standards Capt Griffiths set were high standards, he was the finest at everything he did. As part of the 2nd Battalion's deployment to Nad 'Ali and Nahr-e Saraj in July, he assumed command of his Fire Support Group in support of Arnhem Company.

Capt Griffiths was extremely personable and was loved and highly respected by his men. His attitude and his unwavering personal standards set him apart from the crowd making him a most effective Army Officer with a bright future ahead of him. Capt Griffiths was born to command Infantry Troops in battle, and he was a natural at this. He led from the front and his men loved him for his courage as a result.

A massive character with a huge personality, Capt Griffiths will leave a gaping hole in the Officers' Mess and will be sadly mourned by his brother officers. A force to be reckoned with on the rugby pitch as well as in the bar, he approached all aspects of his life with an infectious enthusiasm.

He lived his short life to the maximum, thoroughly enjoying the social life of a young officer who was always great fun to be around. He was always at the centre of everything, always laughing and often up to some sort of mischief but his cool exterior and innocent persona often kept him out of the Adjutant's office. He will be sorely missed by his family, his girlfriend, Nic, and all

those who were lucky enough to know him.

Captain Griffiths's family paid the following tribute to him:

"Andrew was a beloved son, brother and boyfriend who will be hugely missed for the joy he brought into our lives. We are immensely proud of him and all that he has achieved in his all too short a life. He died doing a job he loved and excelled at. We request that we are left alone as a family to grieve in peace."

Lieutenant Colonel Robbie Boyd, Commanding Officer 2 LANCS, said:

"Captain Andy Griffiths – or 'Griff' as my officers knew him – was an officer with courage, charm, values, humility and above all else a sense of fun. He played as hard as he fought in battle. An inspirational leader of Lions of England, a Regimental son, a friend, a sportsman and a son and brother; a talisman to all who knew him. He was a man who loved his regiment and respected his men and all reciprocated. He will never be forgotten because none of our close Regimental Family will ever be able to forget him.

"I sat with Andy and his men in a Range Hut back in Cyprus in May as we trained together for another deployment to Afghanistan as part of our Theatre Reserve Battalion role. I had selected him early for promotion to Acting Captain and was taking him away from his men in Blenheim Company whom he had already led and fought alongside during Operation Panther's Claw last summer.

"I needed him to become a Fire Support Group Commander for Arnhem Company; an impressive early step up for someone so junior. His men – to his deep embarrassment – all asked, in front of him, if he could stay on as their officer for the demanding tour that we now find ourselves embarked upon in Nad 'Ali and Nahr-e Seraj. His humility was his trademark when in uniform and the respect from his Lions – particularly his young Kingsmen – was genuinely the most impressive I have seen in a young officer in my twenty four years in the Infantry.

"In twelve months of deployments to Central Helmand I have never seen so many soldiers requesting that their tributes be included as words that will follow my own. For myself it has been difficult to write my own words without fighting back a tear, I know that is also the case with my soldiers. Andy was the son of great friends – Mike and Sue – and a brother to Laura, David and Abigail.

"A brother officer and a member of our very strong Family Regiment since he was a boy. Many of my senior soldiers and their wives remember him in his younger days, but all of my officers, soldiers and our families in Cyprus will remember him as the man he became. He became a Lion of a man; courageous, proud of his Regiment, fearsome in battle and a friend to his peers.

"In our regiment we have the unique honour of being 'Lions of England'. In our Regiment Lions

are led by Lions. Captain Andy Griffiths was one of our finest Lions. A leader of Lions, a Lion of a man."

Major Paul Tingey Officer Commanding Arnhem Company, 2 LANCs, said:

"Soldiering was second nature to Captain Griffiths. He was a warrior and a leader. He made sure that he knew every one of his men; not just their names but what made them 'tick'. He was unwavering in his commitment and cared deeply for those under his command. Understanding how to get the best from his men was important to him. He led from the front, never asking men to do something that he was not prepared to do himself.

"He was a popular officer with all who served with him, but it was his natural affinity with those he commanded that set him apart from the pack. The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment has lost one of its most inspirational young commanders. An exceptional officer who will be greatly missed by everyone whose life he touched.

"Andy was an exceptional officer but moreover he was an extraordinary person. He was bright, confident and had an infectious energy that lifted those around him. He was a friend and confidant to countless people, and the World is a lesser place without him in it.

"Our thoughts and prayers are with Andy's family at this difficult time."

Captain Ade Clayton Adjutant, 2 LANCs, said:

"I hosted Andy when he visited the Regiment as a Potential Officer and I have been lucky enough to watch him subsequently join the Regiment and develop from an inexperienced young Officer into a confident and accomplished Support Platoon Commander.

"It was impossible not to admire Andy, such was his professionalism but more importantly his great presence. A totemic figure with a special talent, he will continue to inspire those that worked with him and he will never be forgotten by those of us that were privileged enough to call him a friend."

Captain Nath Liladhar, Company Second in Command, Blenheim Company, 2 LANCs, said:

"I have known Captain Andy Griffiths (or Griff as he was universally known) ever since he first considered joining the Battalion, attending a Potential Officer's visit to our former home in Catterick. Shortly after, he commissioned, joining our ranks in the 2nd Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment and we have served side by side together both in Cyprus and Afghanistan. More importantly, in the all too short time I have known him we have struck up an extremely close friendship; he was like a brother to me.

"Griff was one of the most professionally capable officers I have ever had the pleasure to serve with and he was always looking to better himself. I remember when he first joined the Regiment, always asking questions, always seeking to improve and always in the best interest of his Kingmen.

"This stemmed down to his competitive side, he was without a doubt the most competitive person I have ever known and everything we did turned out to be a competition, to the extent that he would try (and fail) time and time again to beat me in a race from the Company Office to the Mess whilst he rode a push bike and I drove a car!

"Of course, there was more to him than this and I will never forget the fond memories of working together, training together, relaxing together and of course the many nights out whether that be in Cyprus, the UK or in the our Officers' Mess – as all who knew him will testify, the man knew how to party!

"Griff was a fiercely loyal friend, selfless and unthinking when it came to defending his friends or their interests, he had a profound sense of right and wrong and I will never forget this. He was there for you when you needed him and would always give sound advice. Life was never dull around Griff – he made the most of it, always dreaming up new things for us to do at the weekends.

"We had recently been told that we were both to be given jobs together in the Battalion's Fire Support Company and were looking forward to continuing working together, it saddens me to think of the plans that we had made that will no longer happen.

"The world will be a lesser place without Andy Griffiths. He has left a gaping hole in the Regiment with so many friends around him, friends and soldiers from whom he had unconditional respect. He commanded respect because he gave respect, always looking down and never up and for this reason his Kingsmen would have and indeed have followed him anywhere. An intelligent, fit, incredibly robust and very loyal man, Griff would have gone far, whatever he had turned his hand to – a shooting star who has faded before his time. Griff, I'll miss you mate. Rest in Peace."

Captain Bowden-Williams, Company Second in Command, Arnhem Coy, 2 LANCS, said:

"Andy or 'Griff' was a force of nature; a big, strong, loud, blonde, machine of a man known by all as 'Griff' or 'the Griff'. A natural warrior, Griff loved to soldier, he was always happiest when with his Soldiers in the field. He loved his Kingsmen and always led them from the front; never letting anyone beat him without the fiercest competition.

"Griff may have been the complete 'alpha' male but he had a softer side and truly cared for his friends and those close to him. Always there to offer a shoulder or an ear if needed. None will be more aware of this than his Girlfriend Nic. He often spoke of Nic and would then try to deny just how much he liked her. The truth was he loved her and only admitted it to those closest to him. He planned to spend the New Year in Thailand with Nic after Christmas with his family.

"Griff was equally at home on the rugby pitch and in the bar as he was at work, looking to smash people on the pitch and power drink afterwards. He loved to push himself and any excuse to drive a jet ski or speed boat far too powerful for him to handle and he would take it often at the expense of the latest sunglasses he had just bought.

"When Griff was taken from us, a family lost a loving son, the Army lost a shining star, the Regiment lost a Lion, the Kingsmen lost a natural leader and I lost a brother and true friend."

Captain Ben Sheen Blenheim Company Fire Support Group, 2 LANCs, said:

"How do you begin to describe someone like Griff? In truth, I hoped I'd never have to, not in this context.

"When any comrade in arms falls, the circumstances of his life and his passing resonates through all who knew them, deeply and widely and in the case of someone who was as broadly liked and respected as Andy, the inevitable void that is left can seem hard to fill. He was, in pretty much every respect a natural.

"From his innate grasp of what being a commander of men and an officer entailed, to his rapport and obvious affection for the lads, something that you cannot fake and an indicator of true leadership if ever I saw one. He trusted his instincts followed his training, but usually his gut feeling was on the money.

"He was genuinely fearless and would never ask anyone to do something he was not prepared to do first himself. He led from the front and if you want to talk about a character which inspires confidence, well, that was Andy to a tee. Whether on the rugby pitch, over the hills of Cyprus or on the battlefield he wore his ability like a pennant and was followed willingly.

"Griff was larger than life not only physically but in terms of character and personality. His presence in the bar will be as sorely missed as indeed every other aspect of his military persona.

"I don't think I will ever forget our triumphant return from Blenheim's first tour of Afghanistan (and I don't think our Officers' Mess will either and the revelry, some would say carnage, that ensued). We were young, exuberant, full to the brim with life and ready to take on any challenge, and Andy was at the forefront. The world is sadly a quieter more muted place for his passing, I have no doubt that he would have gone on to do great things, in any walk of life, but especially the military.

"As a professional, as a brother officer through good times and bad times, and as a true mate – Andy you will be missed."

Lieutenant Pete Heywood, Platoon Commander, Blenheim Company, 2 LANCs, said:

"It was a privilege to have lived and fought alongside you. Our Mess won't be the same without your encouragement."

Second Lieutenant Matt Thorogood, Platoon Commander, Arnhem Company, 2 LANCs, said:

"I only knew 'Griff' for a short while; however he has made a lasting impression upon me and quickly became one of my closest friends in the Battalion.

"I remember my arrival back in January, as a somewhat nervous, naïve Platoon Commander and it was Griff who immediately welcomed me, taking me straight to the bar in our Regimental Mess in Episkopi. This became somewhat of a trait with me and Griff; whether it be after a hard scrap on the rugby field, or simply because it was a Friday afternoon.

"Rugby was our connection; we planned to head to Twickenham together over leave, something I still intend on doing in his memory. He was a strong leader on the rugby pitch himself, his performances unfortunately firmly keeping me on the bench for most of our games together.

"Griff yearned to get back on the ground in Afghanistan, and could not hide his eagerness when we were given our departure dates. I'd spent what seemed like an age listening to his stories and advice from his previous tour, and felt lucky to be deploying alongside him. His Platoon could not have asked for a more competent leader. I know they will take all he has taught them, and do Griff proud during the remainder of our tour.

"Words cannot describe my feeling of loss. My thoughts are with his family, his girlfriend Nic, and all his mates who were lucky enough to have known him. Griff; I will never forget you."

Second Lieutenant Jamie Glover, Platoon Commander, Blenheim Company, 2 LANCS, said:

"Although I only knew you a matter of months, you were a true friend. As an officer in the Regiment I looked up to you, you were everything an officer should be. You enjoyed working hard and playing hard. I will miss you greatly."

Corporal Deron Stapleton and Kingsman Matt Lucas, 2 LANCS, said:

"You were a brave Lion and leader of all. You will be hugely missed. Gone but not forgotten. May your soul rest in peace. Our thoughts are with you and your family at this sad time."

Corporal Matthew Vernon, 2 LANCS, said:

"You were a true leader of men and a gentleman. Bar none. You will be missed."

Corporal Ryan Walton, 2 LANCS, said:

"Captain Griffiths, you will be missed by all that were ever with you. You were a brilliant soldier that will never ever be forgotten. God bless you and your family."

Lance Corporal Lewis Royle, 2 LANCS, said:

"He was an officer and gentleman and there will be a big gap in the Lions of England but his teachings will always keep us going."

Lance Corporal 'Ras' Rasovo, 2 LANCS, said:

"You were a great man of war. It's been great serving with you. May the Lord shower his

blessings over you and your family. Peace be with you."

Lance Corporal 'Tam' Tamaigelo, 2 LANCS, said:

"You were a true leader of men on the ground. One of the best Blenheim Lions. You got on well with all the lads and someone that we always looked up to on the rugby field. May God bless you and your family."

Lance Corporal Wayne Floyd, Kingsman Anthony Sotheron & Kingsman Ryan Laird, 2 LANCS, said:

"He was taught never to back down and gave his all into everything."

Lance Corporal 'Alfie' Alford, 2 LANCS, said:

"You were a good bloke, an animal on a night out and you always looked out for us, the lads of 5 Platoon. You have left a hole that cannot be filled. "

Lance Corporal Steven Wilson, 2 LANCS, said:

"A good soldier, a good boss and a good friend. You were an outstanding example to how each one of us should conduct our job. You will never be forgotten."

Kingsman Daniel Ogden, 2 LANCS, said:

"A strong and powerful man in his head and in his heart – a true Lion."

Kingsman Dean Helliwell, 2 LANCS, said:

"You were a good man and a great rugby player but above all a great leader. You will be missed highly by all the lads."

Kingsman Aaron Whittaker, 2nd Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, 'Lions of England' said:

"You were a good man and a brilliant commander who will be missed a lot. God be with you Sir."

Kingsman 'Paz' Parry & Kingsman 'Mick' O'Brien, 2 LANCS, said:

"Your passing is a big loss and the gap will never be filled. Sir, gutted you're gone."

Kingsman Bryan Creighton, 2 LANCS, said:

"He was an inspiration and a true leader amongst all ranks, he will truly be missed."

Kingsman Phil Scurr, 2 LANCs, said:

"You will be hugely missed by all who have served alongside you. Our thoughts and prayers go to your family at this difficult time. A great commander and leader of men, you can never be replaced."