

Corporal Harvey Alex Holmes, of 1st Battalion The Mercian Regiment, attached to 40 Commando Royal Marines Battle Group, was killed in an explosion close to patrol base Waterloo, in Sangin, Helmand Province. He was providing protection for his patrol as they investigated a compound east of Wishtan, close to Check Point Chakaw, when he died.

A Company is based in the Wishtan area and over the last month has undertaken a number of patrols, partnered with the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police, to improve security for local Afghans.

Corporal Holmes was 22 years old and from Hyde, Greater Manchester. He attended Astley High School in Dukinfield and enlisted into the Army in 2004.

He trained at the Infantry Training Centre Catterick and posted to The 1st Battalion The 22nd (Cheshire) Regiment in 2005. He previously served on operations in Northern Ireland and Iraq.

Corporal Holmes deployed with A Company, The 1st Battalion The Mercian Regiment (Cheshire), part of the 40 Commando Battle Group, to Sangin in April 2010.

Corporal Holmes was engaged to fiancée Claire. He leaves behind mother Beverley, stepfather David, sister Elizabeth, nephew Nickolas, brother-in-law Andrew and grandparents Jean and Frederick. He shared his family's passion for narrow boats, and before joining the Army was a keen member of the Scout Association.

Corporal Holmes' family said:

Harvey lived for his family and his friends but his passion was the Army. He has made his family extremely proud for the sacrifice he has made and will be missed every day. Harvey has died a true hero and will be with us forever in our hearts.

Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Hadfield, Commanding Officer 1st Battalion The Mercian Regiment (Cheshire) said:

Corporal Harvey Alex Holmes, known as 'Holmesy' to his many friends within the Regiment, was a fine soldier, every inch the Mercian Infantryman. He showed true promise and had a great future, but this has been cruelly stolen from him, his family, his girlfriend and his many friends. In his 5 years with the First Battalion he had passed some of the most arduous courses on offer, and served in Northern Ireland, Belize, the Falkland Islands and Iraq. He had been promoted twice in quick succession, most recently to corporal just last Christmas. He was an exceptional leader and commander, and helped others to give of their best. He was without doubt one of the very best, and will be remembered by all of us who are left. But there is a new star in the sky tonight - it is a bright, enduring one that should inspire all of us as we remember Harvey's selfless courage, humour in the face of adversity and total commitment to his friends

and his Regiment. He died doing what he loved amongst his friends from A and Support Companies. We will remember him as the Cheshire Oak that he was, standing firm always, and striking hard only to save others who were in trouble. He was the epitome of the modern British soldier and we will miss him deeply. Our thoughts are with his family and friends at this most difficult of times.

Lieutenant Colonel Paul James, Commanding Officer 40 Commando Group, Combined Force SANGIN said:

A brave and proud Mercian, Corporal Harvey Holmes served his Regiment in the finest tradition. He died protecting his fellow soldiers in Sangin, part of 40 Commando Battle Group, as they returned to their Patrol Base. A selfless, dedicated and consummate professional he was a rising star having promoted to corporal after only five years in the Army. He will be greatly missed by the Battlegroup and our thoughts and prayers are with his friends, and above all, his family. We shall never forget his sacrifice.

Major Mark Ellwood MBE, Officer Commanding A Company, 1st Battalion The Mercian Regiment (Cheshire) said:

Corporal Harvey Holmes, known by all as 'Holmesy', was the very epitome of professionalism. He loved his job and was very good at it. In just five years he has served in three operational theatres, qualified in a number of specialist roles and promoted two ranks in two years, well ahead of his peers. Field soldiering was everything to him and his enthusiasm for it was infectious. He was a shining example of a soldier on the rise; his peers and subordinates knew this and respected him for it. Always ready to help others to learn, he excelled recently as an instructor on the Potential Junior Non-Commissioned Officers' Cadre. His skills were held in very high regard both within Support Company and across the Battalion as a whole. He was universally popular throughout the Battalion and threw himself into everything he did and was always the heart and soul of any party, living life to the full.

Whilst serving in The Falkland Islands, he was able to visit Mount Longdon where his late father had served with the Parachute Regiment during the 1982 Conflict. This was an emotional experience for him as his father was a huge inspiration to him.

We will miss him and are now the poorer for his loss. That he died doing the very job he so passionately loved, with his best friend at his side is some small consolation. I have no doubt that he would wish us to continue our work here in Afghanistan; we will honour him by so doing. We have had a genuine star taken from us, we mourn his loss but his ever glorious memory will **STAND FIRM AND STRIKE HARD** in our hearts forever.

Captain Lawrence Moore, Corporal James 'Flash' Gordon, Lance Corporal David Brierley and Lance Corporal Geo Maas, Support Company, 1st Battalion The Mercian Regiment (Cheshire) said:

It may sound clichéd but Holmesy was a true soldier. From a military family his whole reason for being was soldiering. He was fiercely proud of his profession, showing the excellence derived from passion and competence. He was often away from us on courses but would always light up the platoon office on his return; big smiles and tall stories in a distinctive voice.

He passed his Junior Non-Commissioned Officers' Cadre earning promotion to Lance Corporal. Holmesy wasn't a barracks soldier, as he told us all the time, and would volunteer for any and every course. However, he found his home in Support Company, enjoying a more relaxed but professional approach to work. Still he travelled as much as possible, from the Falklands to Belize to Iraq, along with the Section Commanders' Battle Course which he passed in the winter of 2009. He always ensured he was present for Platoon social days, regardless of whether he was on leave or on the other side of the country.

Most recently he was selected to instruct on the Junior Non-Commissioned Officers' Cadre whilst waiting to deploy to Afghanistan. He could not wait to get here, to do what he was trained to do.

He had the brightest of futures ahead of him and will be greatly missed by everyone who knew him.

Warrant Officer Class One (Regimental Sergeant Major) Darren Williams, 1st Battalion The Mercian Regiment said:

I first met Cpl Harvey Holmes in 2005 when he joined A Company and I was his Company Sergeant Major. He stood out from the rest even in those early days - a young man with a plan to have a full career in the Army. He quickly established himself as a good, strong and reliable soldier with plenty of ability for a man so young.

We have lost one of our stars; Holmesy was modest, bright, witty, and intelligent. He always led by example. He inspired his men with a cool head and the ability to make the right decisions; he had their confidence. He worked extremely hard and enjoyed the work and camaraderie that Army life brought.

He will be sadly missed by the Regimental family and my thoughts are with his family, his girlfriend and friends at this very difficult and tragic time.

Warrant Officer Class Two (Company Sergeant Major) Matt Henry, A Company, 1st Battalion The Mercian Regiment said:

A fantastic example of an infantry soldier, who will be sadly missed. RIP Holmesy, never forgotten.

Colour Sergeant Wayne Glynn, Support Company, 1st Battalion The Mercian Regiment (Cheshire) said:

Cpl Holmes was a thoroughly professional and well regarded member of Support Company, supremely fit and always ready to face any challenge placed in front of him. Nothing was too much trouble for him, he thrived in the high pressure situations, always leading by example and mentoring junior members in his platoon. His cutting sense of humour was a constant source of morale for the lads in the platoon.

He had recently passed the Section Commanders' Battle Course in Brecon with flying colours, and from there immediately volunteered himself to teach on the Divisional Junior Non-Commissioned Officers' Cadre as a section commander, again where he excelled. When the Company was split up between the rifle companies to form Fire Support Groups, he took this in his stride. He threw himself with tireless enthusiasm into working with A Company and displayed the drive and professionalism we had come to expect from him. Clearly he was destined for great things within the Battalion. He had many close friends and colleagues within his platoon, as well as the Battalion, and will be sorely missed but never forgotten. Our thoughts and deepest condolences go to his family and friends.

Sgt Mark Lomas, Support Company, 1st Battalion The Mercian Regiment (Cheshire) said:

Holmesy, you were a true friend, you were always there for the lads in the Platoon. It was an honour to serve with you and you will always be in my thoughts, like you will be in everyone's thoughts. I promise to you now that you will always be part of us. You did what you loved. Rest in Peace.

Sgt Billy Borlace Support Company, 1st Battalion The Mercian Regiment (Cheshire) said:

The ultimate soldier, professional throughout. See you on the Re-Org mate. Rest in Peace.

Corporal Stu Grundy 1st Battalion The Mercian Regiment (Cheshire) said:

Harvey was an amazing soldier and a better friend. Sleep well old friend. You will be forever missed.

Lance Corporal Jac Howden 1st Battalion The Mercian Regiment (Cheshire) said:

Harvey was an amazing soldier who had a fantastic career ahead of him. He was always the person to boost morale during hard times. It was an honour to have worked with him and a bigger honour to have been his friend. You will always be missed and remembered.

Lance Corporal Steve Power 1st Battalion The Mercian Regiment (Cheshire) said:

I got to know you in Ireland. My God, all you talked about was the Army, one of the keenest I've ever met. You will be missed.

Lance Corporal Mark Elliott 1st Battalion The Mercian Regiment (Cheshire) said:

Holmesy was a top bloke, a soldier at the top of his game and a great friend to match, always in our hearts Harvey!

Lance Corporal Paul Langton 1st Battalion The Mercian Regiment (Cheshire) said:

Holmesy was a great squaddie, one of the best I have worked alongside. Many men in 1 MERCIAN look up to him. He will be missed always.

Private 'Mac' McHarg, Support Company, 1st Battalion The Mercian Regiment (Cheshire) said:

Harvey was a top bloke and a massive icon for any young soldier. It was all about the boys he worked with and in camp he was always smiling when most of the lads were 'snapped'. Cracking mate and a flying squaddie. RIP brother, will miss you loads.

Private Chris Cunningham, Support Company, 1st Battalion The Mercian Regiment (Cheshire) said:

Holmesy was by far the keenest soldier I know. He had the utmost respect for all his men and will be missed massively.

Private Robbie Jones, 1st Battalion The Mercian Regiment (Cheshire) said:

Holmesy gave the ultimate sacrifice doing the job he loved. Everyone looked up to him. He will always be in our hearts and never forgotten.