

Corporal Thomas Mason

The Black Watch, 3rd Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland (3 SCOTS)

It is with deep regret that the Ministry of Defence must confirm the death of Corporal Thomas 'Tam' Mason from The Black Watch, 3rd Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland (3 SCOTS), at the Royal Centre for Defence Medicine, Selly Oak Hospital, on Sunday 25 October 2009.

Corporal Mason

Corporal Mason was injured when an improvised explosive device detonated during an operation in Kandahar province on 15 September 2009. Despite the best efforts of medical staff, both in theatre and back in the UK, over a period of nearly six weeks, he sadly died as a result of his wounds.

Corporal Thomas Mason, known as Tam, was 27. He was born in Bellshill, Glasgow, and brought up in Rosyth, Fife. He joined the Army in February 2005 and, after completing basic training, he joined the Battalion in Warminster, Wiltshire.

He deployed to Afghanistan on Operation HERRICK in 2006 before returning for a promotion course. He qualified as a Mortar Fire Controller in 2007 and was promoted to corporal. He deployed again to Afghanistan in March 2009.

Lieutenant Colonel Stephen Cartwright, Commanding Officer 3 SCOTS, said:

"Corporal Tam Mason was a highly motivated and exceptional junior non-commissioned officer who had only been in the Army for four years. A late joiner to Service life, his experience and maturity allowed him to be promoted twice in quick succession, evidence of the talent of the man and the dedication he gave to his vocation. He had set his heart on Special Forces selection next year and no-one would have bet against him reaching his ultimate goal. He was an immensely popular and modest man and he will be sorely, sorely missed. He has given his life in the service of his friends in the Battalion, for the Royal Regiment of Scotland, his country, and the people of Afghanistan.

"Our deepest thoughts and prayers are with his wife, Kylie, and his family who have been with him by his side as he has fought for his life over the last few weeks. It has been a desperate time for them all and we pray that they can take some comfort from the fact that their Tam was a hero and that he is now resting in peace. We will all miss him terribly but he will not be forgotten."

Captain David Mack, Mortar Platoon Commander, said:

"Corporal Tam Mason was one of those special people that one has the opportunity to meet every so often in a lifetime. Corporal Mason was a man with direction, a man with real tangible potential, and a man who would deliver on his word. I can still recall a long drive back to Fort George from Otterburn in which Corporal Mason detailed a myriad of his interests: he was an expert in a number of martial arts and also an amateur chef, with a special interest in pastries. I was both impressed and amused by the depth of this soldier.

"Deployed on Operation HERRICK 10, Corporal Mason was at the top of his game; he was at his physical peak and thoroughly embraced the Scottish warrior ethos. Corporal Mason was a rugged, experienced, and hardened soldier who had been involved with the fiercest fighting that the battlegroup had witnessed. Often in the midst of a fight, Corporal Mason would heroically expose himself to enemy fire in order to get a vantage point to call in fire missions and strike the enemy with mortar fire. Technically, a superb mortar fire controller, Corporal Mason's confidence in his own abilities was founded on natural talent. Corporal Mason could always be relied on to remain cool and collected on the radio when calling in fire missions despite being in very difficult situations and under intense pressure. In addition, Corporal Mason was able to apply wisdom in challenging circumstances and was able to make the difficult decision of using appropriate and justified force. In short, Corporal Mason thrived on operations.

"In camp, Corporal Mason was equally as reliable as he was in the field. Corporal Mason had high expectations of himself and of the other members of the mortar platoon and he strove to maintain the highest standards. On numerous career courses, Corporal Mason demonstrated his natural intelligence and determination and was always ranked at the top of his colleagues.

"Corporal Mason's focus throughout his military career was driven by a desire to complete Special Forces selection. The loss of Corporal Mason is felt by all members of the Mortar Platoon and our thoughts and prayers remain with Kylie and his family."

Captain Ben Collis, Battalion Adjutant and a former Mortar Officer, said:

"Corporal Tam Mason was bright, with a thirst for knowledge about his chosen skill but as stubborn as a mule, provoking some highly amusing and longstanding banter with his older MFC [mortar fire controller] partners. He was dedicated in everything he did, whether it be patiently explaining some technical mortaring point to a puzzled jock or on exercise in the driving rain of the Highlands. He was utterly loyal, trusted and a joy to work with. He will be sorely missed.'

Warrant Officer Class Two Andy Lambert, Charlie (Fire Support) Company Sergeant Major, said:

"Tam was always enthusiastic in all aspects of his job. A quirky sense of humour he was always at the forefront of the banter within the Mortar Platoon. Tam also had an abundance of drive and determination and would always strive to improve himself and other members around him. A big loss to the Mortar Platoon and a massive loss to the Company. RIP Tam from all the boys in Charlie (Fire Support) Company: 'Gone but never forgotten'."

Sergeant Sid Masson, Mortar Platoon Section Commander, said:

"Tam Mason was the most talented Mortar Fire Controller that I have worked with in years, his dedication to the Army and the Platoon was unquestionable. He was a model professional that had a wicked sense of humour even during the most daunting of situations. He will be greatly missed by every member of the Platoon and by the wider Battalion that had the privilege to work with and meet him and call him a friend. His memory will live on forever."

Sergeant Gordon 'Goggs' Porter, Mortar Fire Controller, said:

"Tam was a great friend who had a wicked sense of humour with his ready smile he was always there to cheer you up. Tam will be greatly missed by all the members of the Platoon and indeed the Battalion all our thoughts go out to his family at this time.

"Tam was an excellent Junior NCO who set an example that we all should aspire to. He had the full trust of all his colleagues and friends. His professionalism shone through in all his undertakings always producing exceptional results even in the most arduous of conditions.

"He was a man of immense courage bringing in fire for his friends even when his own position was precarious and latterly with his long fight for his own life. Tam is an irreplaceable member of the Platoon and the Battalion. We will miss you mate."

Sergeant Eck Reilly, Mortar Platoon Section Commander, said:

"Tam was a great friend and a very strong Mortar Fire Controller in the Mortar Platoon and a great man to work with. Even though I only worked with him for a short period of time, it was plain to see that he was going to become a very strong member of the Platoon.

"He had a great sense of humour no matter what the situation was. He was a great joker with the boys in the Platoon and looked forward to the boys getting him back no matter what the prank was on him. Tam's life was the Army and he will be a great loss to the Army, the Battalion and the Mortar Platoon."

Corporal Jamie Rock, Mortar Fire Controller, said:

"Tam Mason was a very close friend who was always there to help you with anything no matter what. He was an outgoing person – he was always playing pranks on other guys but was always first to laugh when they were played on him. The Army was his life. He had many ambitions and I am sure he would have succeeded. Tam touched many peoples' hearts and will be missed deeply but knowing Tam he would want everyone to have a good time for him and not for us to get ourselves down. You mean so much mate RIP. Tam, you will be sorely missed."

Corporal Jamie Steele, Mortar Fire Controller, said:

"Tam was the best of the best when it came to doing his job, he loved being in the Mortar

Platoon and being a Mortar Fire Controller. When it came to having a laugh and a joke Tam was always at the centre of it and it was great to see that he hadn't changed. I knew Tam from school and we would always talk about how he got caught for stuff he had done. We would always talk about how he had no luck because he had ginger hair but in his eyes it was strawberry blond!

"I remember when we were on a NAAFI break at Fort George and he bought a carton of milk took a big drink and his face went chalk white he was OK until he saw the milk was out of date and started to be sick as we were all laughing at him, he saw the funny side and bought another milk. Tam was a true friend throughout school and the Battalion. We will all miss him but we will never forget him a true hero."

Corporal Lenny Ramsay, Mortar Line Command Post Operator, said:

"Tam was a brilliant example of a young thrusting soldier who had only been in the Battalion for a short period of time and had gained the rank of corporal. His humour was the typical squaddie humour and the banter that flowed between him and the Platoon was second to none.

"He was confident and - maybe to an outside party he may have seemed to have a 'big head' because of it - but his friends knew when he set his mind to something he would achieve it. Tam was fit and robust and liked nothing more than going to the Canadian gym to throw people around like empty shell cases during martial arts lessons. Tam was true to the core values and was an asset to the Mortar Platoon and anyone else who was lucky to have crossed paths with him. You will always be remembered but never forgotten and sorely missed. Rest in Peace mate!"

Lance Corporal Alex Little said:

"Tam was an amazing character who showed such energy and enthusiasm in everything he did. He will be sorely missed for his humour, wit and pride both as a mortar NCO and as a friend. You will always be remembered Tam."

Private Kyle McIntosh said:

"Tam had his own brand of humour that will be what I will always remember about him, always there to listen to the jocks and never one to be too critical of others. An inspiration to the younger members of the platoon, he will be a void that the platoon will never fill with such a character again. RIP mate."

Private John Lawson said:

"Corporal Tam Mason was a good friend. He was always up for a laugh and was good at his job. I knew Tam when he came to Charlie Company in Belfast. He was a good mortar fire controller and a good signaller. Tam taught me my trade and he will always be in my heart."

Private Benui Tawake said:

"Tam Mason was highly motivated no matter what the task. He was always willing to help anyone in need and was always easily approachable if you had a problem or just wanted a chat. He will be sorely missed by everyone in the Platoon. Rest in Peace Brother."

Private Billy Sinuleleiwasa said:

"Tam was always one for jokes and always keen in everything he did. He would always go out of his way to help the jocks whether out on the ground or during the mortar cadres. Always during PT [physical trianing] you would hear his voice above anyone else telling us to keep together and would constantly run up and down the squad to make sure we were ok and not struggling. He will be dearly missed by the Platoon. Rest in Peace Brother."

Private Graham Johnson said:

"Corporal Tam Mason was energetic and entertaining. A leader, Tam was held in the highest regard. His knowledge, professionalism and pride gave us inspirations to be successful. A privilege to have served with him, his absence will leave a void that will be difficult to fill. RIP Tam."