

Fusilier Simon Annis

2nd Battalion The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers (2 RRF)

Killed in Afghanistan on Sunday 16 August 2009.

Born in Salford in 1987 Fusilier Simon Annis attended Culcheth High School, Warrington, until he had completed his GCSEs. After leaving school his desire to test himself saw him pursue a challenging and varied career when he joined his local Infantry Regiment, The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers aged just 19.

In 2006, he completed the physically demanding Infantry Training course at ITC Catterick ready to embrace the varied lifestyle on offer in the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers. Having completed training he was to move to Cyprus to join the Regiment in a demanding training year where he deployed to Jordan on a tough 6 week training exercise.

From the outset Fusilier Annis was to experience the full range of activities on offer to a young man in the infantry. In his short time in the Army Fusilier Annis has served in Cyprus, Jordan and latterly Afghanistan. It was in Jordan that Fusilier Annis developed his taste for scuba diving. He was able to deploy to Egypt in 2007 and Belize in 2008 to further his diving skills and love of the sport.

Having experienced a plethora of activities he returned to the UK in the early part of 2008 to Hounslow West London as part of a Battalion move. Here Fusilier Annis stood proudly outside the Royal Palaces as part of the Battalion's Public Duties commitment. In February 2009 Fusilier Annis married his beloved Caroline just one month before he was called upon to deploy to Sangin, Afghanistan. Fusilier Annis approached his first operational tour as he did everything else in his life with good humour and a professional attitude.

Whilst in Sangin, Fusilier Annis was an integral part of Three Platoon serving as a Light Machine Gunner. Fusilier Annis sense of humour and positive attitude helped to inspire the men of Three Platoon through some dark days, including the death of his friend and colleague Cpl Joey Etchells. Fusilier Annis was tragically killed on 16 August 2009 whilst evacuating his section commander; it is fitting that Fusilier Annis was there for his friends right up to the end.

His Commanding Officer Lieutenant Colonel Charlie Calder, CO 2 RRF, said:

"Fusilier Simon Annis was a larger than life character, and a dedicated soldier. Always at the heart of whatever was going on, it was no surprise to me that he died whilst trying to save his mortally wounded section commander. He should be seen as a shining example to the nation of what selfless commitment really means. The heartfelt condolences of every Fusilier in Afghanistan go to Caroline, his wife of only a few months."

Lieutenant Colonel Rob Thomson MBE, CO 2 RIFLES Battlegroup, said:

"Fusilier Annis was delightful in addition to being a quality soldier. A huge man, I used to encounter him on my way to breakfast on an almost daily basis and he used to stop me and ask me if I was OK. He had an ever-present grin and used to carry far more than his normal share on patrol. He was always laughing and used to lighten the mood in the darkest of times, often by breaking into particularly tuneless song. He leaves behind Caroline, his beloved wife of less than six months, who will be devastated. Our prayer is that somehow she will find the strength and courage to face this the most unimaginably awful time."

His Company Commander Major Jo Butterfill, OC A Company Group 2 RRF, said:

"Fusilier Annis was an A Company character from the moment he arrived. A quiet, sometimes unassuming personality, his extraordinary, wry sense of humour and his incredible capacity for shouldering more than his fair share of any task nevertheless made him immensely popular across the ranks. If the job of the infantryman is sometimes simply to endure, then Fusilier Annis had that ability, and then some.

"Unshakable by anything the Army or the enemy could throw at him, he was rock-solid under both fire and the privations of operational life, and never to be found without a smile on his face. It was absolutely typical of the man that he died in the attempt to extract a wounded friend from danger. We have lost a truly excellent soldier, and a staunch comrade; the company is immeasurably poorer for his passing. Foremost in our thoughts however, is his new wife Caroline who has lost her cherished husband. Our heartfelt condolences go to her at this dreadful time."

Lieutenant Alan Williamson, Platoon Commander, Three Platoon, A Company 2RRF, Attached 2 RIFLES, said:

"How do I sum up Fusilier Annis in just a few short words? Cheeky would be an understatement, the life and soul of the platoon would not be too far from the truth. During our darkest days out here in Sangin Fusilier Annis has been there to lighten the mood and pick up morale. The man was a delight. Whether it be his jokes and banter or his spontaneous outbreak into song he could always make you smile and forget your troubles – how we could do with him now."

"Fusilier Annis was no joker when the chips were down! He was fiercely competent with his LMG, bragging that he was the 'best gunner in battalion', a statement not far from the truth. He was a soldier who was always there for his friends and commanders, never too busy to stop and talk, he has touched a lot of hearts within the Battlegroup. I spent three weeks scuba diving in Belize with Fusilier Annis a year ago and he was the centre of attention for the entire trip. On his 21st birthday night out in San Pedro he even managed to befriend some American tourists and convinced them to buy him drinks for most of the night, such was the personality of the man."

"Fusilier Annis was a man with a big heart and a bright future, he was a real people person. It's fitting that he died trying to save his friend, right at the front of the CASEVAC party. I shall miss

Fusilier Annis and his quirky sense of humour, his mischievous ways and his appalling singing! But this loss is nothing compared to his wife Caroline whom he loved so much. My thoughts and prayers are with her and his family now during these darkest of days."

Corporal Paul Whiting, Section Commander 3 YORKS, said:

"Fusilier Annis was a character, the little time I knew him, he would always make you smile, whatever the situation. He was another legend of the platoon, if not the legend. He was great and very professional. I'm just sorry he won't be able to live out his dreams of becoming a pro poker player. Rest in peace buddy."

Corporal Dan Henderson, 9 Platoon C Company, said:

"I was Simon's Corporal when he was in training at ITC(C). I got to know him very well. He was the light in the Section, he had a cheekiness that only he could get away with. No matter how hard things were, Simon could bring a smile to people's faces. Simon was very caring and full of joy, the world is a lesser place without him."

Lance Corporal Nike Thomas, 10 Platoon C Company, said:

"Simon was one of the funniest lads I have ever met. I was in A Company with him in Cyprus, we would always go out for a few beers together and he would ensure that every night would be memorable. My thoughts go out to all his family and his wife."

Fusilier Tom Swann, 3 Platoon A Company, said:

"Si was one of those blokes you couldn't help but love. He was always smiling and taking the piss out of someone. He was one of the few people who could cheer you up. Whether it was with his snide comments, stupid songs or his atrocious beat boxing. He was always the first to complain about things, but when out on the ground he was fearless, always the first to return fire in contact. He knew when to draw the line and always got the job done. The bloke was an absolute legend, the Platoon, Company and Battalion has lost a true friend. Our thoughts now turn to his beloved wife, Caroline and his family. Our deepest sympathies go out to them. Miss ya mate x."

Fusilier James Burke, 3 Platoon A Company, said:

"Simon Annis was one of my best mates. We got to Battalion at roughly the same time and have spent all three and a half years in 1 PI and now 3 PI. Annis was a pain in the arse at time, but I wouldn't have changed him for any other way. Going to your stag do was one of the best nights of my life and was gutted I couldn't get to your wedding. Reading your eulogy at your Vigil Service was one of the hardest things I've ever done, but one of the proudest, telling everybody how awesome a friend you were and how much you meant to me and the Three Platoon lads. The good guys always die young and that's an understatement for you mate. Been a pleasure mate and I'm sure you'll always be watching over us, keeping us safe. Gone but not forgotten Si!"

Fusilier John Jones, 3 Platoon A Company, said:

"Si was a good friend of mine, I spoke to him now and then in Hounslow and he made me laugh back then, but it wasn't till we came on tour that I started to know him a lot more. He was always morale for the section and even if he did wind everyone up now and then, he could always take it when the joke was on him. He was a big fan of poker and always loved taking money of us when we lost. Well, rest in peace my friend, and I'll never forget you or the good times we had. Specky."

Fusilier Jay Connolly, 3 Platoon A Company, said:

"Si' was an awesome soldier and a very loyal friend. If I was to describe Annis in one word, that word would be "legend ", he would always know how to make you smile, however bad you felt.

"As a friend I couldn't ask for any better than Si. Me and him were going away over Christmas, with the wifey's and he kept saying that he couldn't wait to get minging at the 24 hour bar even though it would only take him two pints. He was always talking about his wife "Caz" who he loved with all his heart. He couldn't wait to spend the rest of his life with her. Si you will always be a great friend. I will miss you mate. My thoughts and sympathies go out to your wife Caroline your family and friends. RIP mate, see you on the other side."

Fusilier Andrew Evans, 3 Platoon A Company, said:

"Si was a person that everyone liked, he had a heart of gold and never had a bad thing to say about anyone, unless it was banter, which he gave out as well took. He always had a smile on his face and had a way of putting a smile on everyone else's face, no matter how bad things were.

"As a soldier, he knew when to be the joker and when to be a soldier, which he did extremely well. He could be given any task, which he would always do, and smiling whilst doing it. He will always be missed but never replaced all our thoughts now go to his family and wife Caroline."

Fusilier Adam Gregg, 2 Platoon A Company Group, said:

"I can't think of many words to describe his sense of humour, which everyone knows was second to none, but if I was to describe him as a soldier and a friend the list is endless. He was honourable, loyal, brave, honest and a true hero, one in a million, just a few that could describe this true hero. He was a true Fusilier and no one could have asked more of him. My thoughts are with his wife Caroline, his family and friends."

Fusilier Craig Ashwell, 2 Platoon A Company Group, said:

"I've had the privilege to have known Simon for about three years since he first rocked up to Battalion in Cyprus. In the time that I've known him he always put a smile on my face. Some of the stuff he would come out with was unbelievable - put it this way, there was never a dull moment with him. He was definitely the joker of the company. He made a lot of friends with his

time spent in A Company, you couldn't do anything but love the guy but that was just typical of his nature and the way he did things.

"I'm not just speaking for myself but for the whole of A Company he will be sorely missed and I still can't believe he's gone but I know he will be watching over us all for the duration of our time left in Afghanistan. My heart and sincere condolences go out to his devoted wife Caroline, his loving family and to whom to have known him. Good bye my friend, RIP."

Fusilier Lawrie Stevenson, 2 Platoon A Company Group, said:

"Since the start Annis was one of those characters who always made you laugh and we all loved him when he arrived at Battalion. In Cyprus I got the privilege to know Annis quite well, he had the ability to make anyone laugh with his dry sense of humour and I'm sure that right now he is watching over the Company and most importantly his wife and family. Farewell mate you will always be remembered."

Fusilier Jonathan Hooley, 2 Platoon A Company Group, said:

"Good friend and a brilliant soldier. He was laid back and always had a smile on his face no matter what. Annis kept spirits high and he was always there to listen and give a helping hand. He would put others needs first. He was a brilliant man full of life and will be sorely missed."

Fusilier Ryan Hyndman, 2 Platoon A Company Group, said:

"There are so many words that could describe Annis; that's the sort of person he was, full of character. He was one of the friendliest people to meet in this Battalion and I am privileged to be one of his many friends. His sense of humour was pure morale and he always made me and the lads laugh. He had this cheeky way about him that you just had to admire. It's a massive loss to this Battalion and Regiment. He is in all of our thoughts and our hearts and I can only offer my deepest sympathy to his family and his beloved wife."

Fusilier Daniel Swales, 9 Platoon C Company, said:

"Simon and I first met on a diving expedition. He was a very good diver and was always cracking jokes, messing around and had a smile on his face. He was the life of the group and I will truly miss him."

From all the men at Patrol Base Woqab:

"Fallen but not forgotten. Good memories of another great man and... once a Fusilier always a Fusilier."