

4TH REGIMENT ROYAL ARTILLERY

Gunner Zak Cusack was born on 16 September 1989 in Stoke on Trent. He joined the Army in September 2006, attending the Army Foundation College, Harrogate. Upon completion of his training, he was posted to 4th Regiment Royal Artillery, then based in Osnabrück, Germany. He joined 97 Battery (Lawson's Company) and deployed to Afghanistan on Operation HERRICK 7 as a member of a light gun detachment. Upon return from Afghanistan, he moved with the Regiment to Topcliffe, North Yorkshire.

Having impressed with his fitness, aptitude and enthusiasm, Gunner Cusack was selected to transfer to a Fire Support Team and undertook extensive training in Canada between June and July 2009 before commencing Mission Specific Training for Operation HERRICK 12 in September last year. His Fire Support Team moved under command of 129 (Dragon) Battery at the beginning of 2010 and he deployed to Afghanistan in March based in Nahr-e Saraj (South) with Malta Company, 1 MERCIAN, supporting 1st Battalion The Royal Gurkha Rifles.

During his time in Afghanistan, his Fire Support Team has conducted dozens of joint patrols with the Afghan National Army to reassure the local population in Nahr-e Saraj and prevent intimidation of villagers by the insurgents. It was on one of these reassurance patrols in an area around Enezai Village when he was killed in action during a small arms fire engagement with insurgent forces.

A keen sportsman and fitness enthusiast, Gunner Cusack thrived on life. Whether boxing, football or in the gym, he gave his all. He excelled in his position as Fire Support Team signaller and was a key personality within his crew. Socially gregarious, he was an extremely popular member of his Battery, and his energy and enthusiasm were contagious.

An only child, he leaves behind his mother Tracey and father Sean. Gunner Zak Cusack's Family said:

Zak was a courageous, compassionate and charismatic young man. We are justly proud of not only the job that he did, but of the complete person we all knew and loved. For such a young man, Zak's infectious sense of humour, appetite for life and truly romantic heart inspired so many others.

Zak's loss leaves a hole in our hearts, a chasm in our lives and many, many other broken hearts behind. He had a fire in his soul that will burn brightly in all our memories. He is our beautiful boy, loving son and best friend, in Zak's own words, 'he is a ledge' (Legend).

Lieutenant Colonel Chris Squier RA, Commanding Officer 4th Regiment Royal Artillery said:

Gunner Zak Cusack was a big man with the personality to go with it. Young, fit and with a

healthy love of life, he was always close to, or at the heart of, the action. A Stoke City fan in the North East Gunners will always have his work cut out, but his combination of cheeky charm and buoyant character always won out. As a soldier he had already given more than most in his short life. This was his second tour of Afghanistan having deployed in 2007 on his 18th birthday. True to his character and

commitment he fought hard to move from the Gun Line to become a member of a Fire Support Team. Here his true potential shone through - he was a man made for the role. He fell as he had lived life, in the thick of things and with his mates in 97 Battery (Lawson's Company) and B (Malta) Company 1 MERCIAN. My thoughts and condolences go out to his parents Tracey and Sean and his many friends at home whose true loss we can only imagine. He will remain Forever Fourth.

Major Rich Grover, Company Commander B (Malta) Company, 1st Battalion The Mercian Regiment (Cheshire) said:

In the short time I had the privilege of commanding Gunner Cusack, he proved to be a highly professional and competent forward observer who carried a ready smile and fun loving attitude. The measure of the man was the fact that the platoons wanted him with them for the patrols as they trusted him, and he had already proven that when the going got tough, he was able to step up to the plate and deliver; just the type of man required in a tight spot. His loss will be felt by us all, and our thoughts go out to his family and friends, all those who love him.

Major Matt Birch, Battery Commander 97 Battery (Lawson's Company), 4th Regiment Royal Artillery said:

Gunner Zak Cusack was an excellent man and soldier whom I got to know well whilst working in the confines of the same vehicle for a two month exercise in BATUS, Canada, last year. This was effectively the beginning of our build-up training for the current deployment to Afghanistan; I was immediately struck by his energy and work ethic whilst being in the field. This was Zak at his best, a fit and resourceful soldier who cared and worked tirelessly for the other members of the Battery. When we were challenged by hard times he would maintain a level head but also lighten our spirits with his enduring wit.

This strength of character and fun loving attitude made him a central character on the Battery's social stage. His professionalism made him respected throughout the Battery; I already anticipated promoting him during this tour and he was displaying the capability himself on operations during both tours of Afghanistan, as the soldier that you wanted by your side in the face of adversity. He embodied the Lawson's spirit of professionalism and fun. His loss will affect the heart of the Battery family and we know that the remainder of us will have to work twice as hard to make up for the huge gap he has left. Zak personified the spirit of an artilleryman at its best and we will miss him deeply. Our thoughts are with his family and friends at this most difficult of times.

Major Nick Constable, Battery Commander 129 (Dragon) Battery, 4th Regiment Royal Artillery said:

Although having only been attached to my Battery for a short time, Gunner Zak Cusack has made a lasting impression on all of us. He was a young man with tremendous energy, a sharp wit and a zest for life. His stories of escapades on the town with his many friends were a constant source of amusement. I knew Zak as a soldier in a job which he loved and focussed on operations. He was an extremely capable forward observer with tremendous potential for the future, a talented radio operator and a courageous individual who would put his team members and friends before himself. Only one week prior to his tragic death, exhausted, whilst returning from a patrol which received a casualty he relieved a tiring stretcher party of their burden by putting his injured colleague over his shoulders and carrying him through boggy terrain to safety; such was the determined and selfless character of Gunner Cusack.

Capt Stu Lennox, Fire Support Team Commander, 97 Battery (Lawson's Company), 4th Regiment Royal Artillery said:

I have never seen Zak without a smile on his face. He was a constant source of morale and cherished not only by his Fire Support Team but the entire Battery. He had incredible potential and ability and also a thirst for fun and adventure. Zak was dedicated to his physical fitness, his friends and his job within the Fire Support Team. He was always a good addition to any social occasion and would often tell me stories of his crazy nights out. However, at the same time, he would spend many hours a day in the gym ensuring he was both capable of doing his job and ready for the beach on post tour leave.

Warrant Officer Class Two (Troop Sergeant Major) Marc Ravenhill, 97 Battery

(Lawson's Company), 4th Regiment Royal Artillery said:

Zak was a larger than life character in the Troop and indeed within the Battery who made friends easily. He was always a highly motivated individual who wanted to be involved in everything the Tactical Group took part in and would never shy away from a new challenge. Zak could always be found wherever the action was, be that at work, on the sports pitch or on a social basis with his friends. He was a keen, bright and talented soldier who was not scared to stand up for what he believed in. Zak will be sadly missed by all members of the Troop and the Battery. My sympathies go to his family and friends at this time.

Bombardier Paul Madden, Command Post Non-Commissioned Officer, 97 Battery (Lawson's Company), 4th Regiment Royal Artillery said:

He was a well known member of the Battery and the Regiment. He was always happy and making jokes even when times were hard. It is hard to believe that we saw him just the other week, he was so happy to see the boys, telling us how much he was enjoying himself. He will be sorely missed by his friends and our thoughts go out to him and his family.

Bombardier Dougie Collins, Forward Air Controller, 97 Battery (Lawson's Company), 4th Regiment Royal Artillery said:

Zak was the life and soul of the party, always there to make dull situations bright. Some looked

upon him as being a bit of a Jack the Lad, I looked upon him as a man's man. Zak would always give 100% in everything that he did, be it at work, or at play, and never needing any encouragement, because he was always at the forefront of everything. As a friend he will be massively missed by all who knew him and he has left a void that can never be filled. He has written his own page in history and

his memory will live on in all of us. Zak has brought us all joy and happiness and for that I am thankful.

Bombardier Dave Southern, Joint Fires Junior Non-Commissioned Officer, 97 Battery (Lawson's Company), 4th Regiment Royal Artillery said:

Zak was very much a lad's lad, he was always at the centre of everything, be it socially or professionally. He will be sorely missed by all who knew him. He has left a massive gap amongst his friends in the Regiment and the Tactical Group that knew him best. I will miss the banter whenever Bolton played Stoke. My deepest condolences go to his family and friends back home on their loss; Zak will always be a part of 97 Battery Tactical Group and will never be forgotten.

Lance Bombardier Nath Mandall, Joint Fires Junior Non-Commissioned Officer, 97 Battery (Lawson's Company), 4th Regiment Royal Artillery said:

I have never in my life known a lad like Zak, outgoing, easy to get on with and a wicked sense of humour, his ability to put most of us to shame in PT will stay with me. He loved being a soldier and took great pride in his job and everything he did, always a team player and never needed to be asked twice to get something done. Zak will be sorely missed within the Battery and in the Regiment, as well as on nights out socially. My thoughts and best wishes go out to you and your family at this time. He will never be forgotten by all those who have had the great pleasure to

have known him.

Lance Bombardier Paulo Liga, Gun Number, 97 Battery (Lawson's Company), 4th Regiment Royal Artillery said:

A good lad. He was a good bloke, always happy, one of the best guys in the Battery. He had something in him that no one else had - the personality and character he had was so special that I knew he was going a long way in his career. I was with him on the last HERRICK tour which clearly influenced him and he grew very strong. A good laugh out on the town in Germany, we will miss him. My condolences go to his family and may the good Lord continue to be with his family in these times. May his soul rest in peace.

Lance Bombardier Scott Casson, Joint Fires Junior Non-Commissioned Officer, 97 Battery (Lawson's Company), 4th Regiment Royal Artillery said:

Zak was a character who was larger than life; he was an extremely popular lad within the

Battery, even more so within the Tactical Group. Zak was always up for a laugh, and the first one up for a party, and never short of a story of his escapades from the weekend. At work Zak was a very dedicated and professional soldier, always giving 100% all of the time. Highly respected and looked up to by the junior lads, and an equal amongst his peers, he will be sadly missed by all within the Regiment.

Gunner Daniel Pugh, Fire Support Team Signaller, 97 Battery (Lawson's Company), 4th Regiment Royal Artillery said:

Zak Cusack, what a guy. Serving alongside Cusack was an honour because he was a professional and selfless soldier who put others before himself, even in his personal life. He has made times feel so much better than what they have because he had a special way to bring the best out of every situation, bad or good and I will miss him greatly.

Gunner Graham Thompson, Joint Fires Signaller, 129 (Dragon) Battery, 4th Regiment Royal Artillery said:

Zak was a great friend who will be truly missed. He will never be forgotten; all the lads will remember him. I will miss those fun times we had and especially the nights on the town.

Gunner 'Chappy' Chapman, Fire Support Team Assistant, 97 Battery (Lawson's Company), 4th Regiment Royal Artillery said:

Zak was a friend in a million, with so many stories that will remain with me forever, thinking of you all at this very difficult time.