

Lieutenant Colonel Rupert Thorneloe
1st Battalion Welsh Guards

Rupert was the Commanding Officer of 1st Battalion Welsh Guards, which is currently working as Battle Group Centre South in Helmand Province. The Battle Group was responsible for improving the security situation in the Provincial Capital, Lashkar Gah, and the surrounding areas - a formidable area of responsibility, containing about half the province's population. As a mark of the challenge faced, the number of soldiers in the Battle Group he was commanding had grown to well over 1000.

Rupert was commissioned into the Welsh Guards in 1992. At Regimental Duty he served as a Platoon Commander and Company Second-in-Command both in the UK and on Operations in Northern Ireland, as Adjutant in London, and as a Company Commander, again in the UK and on Operations in Northern Ireland. Extra Regimentally he has spent a year as an Intelligence Liaison Officer with the RUC Special Branch (in South Armagh); a year as an Intelligence Analyst at the Permanent Joint Headquarters (Northwood); two years as the Operations Officer of 1st (UK) Armoured Division (in Germany and Iraq); and two years in the MOD as Military Assistant to the Assistant Chief of Defence Staff (Policy) and, latterly, Military Assistant to the Secretary of State for Defence. He assumed command of the 1st Battalion on 28th October 2008. He was a very keen polo player until the age of 28. Since then his primary interests have been sailing and game shooting.

Rupert leaves behind his wife, Sally, and their daughters Hannah and Sophie. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family at this very difficult time.

Brigadier Tim Radford, Commander Task Force Helmand, said,

"Rupert Thorneloe was, quite simply, a superb Commanding Officer. He was an inspiration to his men, and they loved him for it. He cared deeply for them and the whole Welsh Guards family. He died as he lived his life, leading from the front. As his Brigade Commander, I valued his leadership, his honesty and his enormous moral and physical courage. He was destined for greatness in the Army. As a friend for 12 years, I will remember him as a devoted husband to Sally and a most wonderful father to Hannah and Sophie. I shall miss him dreadfully."

Colonel Sandy Malcolm, Regimental Lieutenant Colonel Welsh Guards writes:

"Lieutenant Colonel Rupert Thorneloe was an outstanding man and an officer destined for the top and the Regiment has lost one of their very finest. He cared passionately for the men under his command and what his Battalion were doing in Afghanistan.

"He had all the qualities that made him special. He was the consummate professional,

charismatic, possessed an intellect that was as sharp as you can get, able to absorb issues large and small and he was utterly charming. He had time for everyone and would always go that extra mile to ensure that everything he did was 100% or more. We were all the beneficiaries of his wisdom and advice.

"Whether in the Regiment or in the many demanding appointments held in the Army he touched all with his infectious enthusiasm, sense of humour and sheer professionalism. He was acutely aware of the dangers his Battalion in Afghanistan faced having already seen a number of his men killed in action and injured in battle on the tour. But he led from the front inspiring confidence, trust and huge respect from those under his command who will all miss him greatly, as we will at home.

"His death is a huge loss to us all and all our thoughts and prayers are with his time. We will always remember him as one of our very best. He was a simply remarkable man and officer and a great Welsh Guardsman."

Major Andrew Speed, the Battalion Second in Command, said:

"I was very fortunate to be the second in command to a truly talented officer. To see him in operation was an inspirational sight. His attention to detail and his drive were extremely impressive. When we were flagging through late nights and early mornings he still had the resilience to push on.

"As a man he did not seek personal gain. His motivation was always for the Welsh Guards, his men and his family. This was his focus and this is what drove him to work as he did. He was compassionate and caring and despite working us hard he always had words of encouragement and he always took time out to laugh and joke keeping our morale high even in the toughest of circumstances.

"I shared an office with him for the last nine months. It was a privilege that I will never forget because sitting there listening to him in action taught me more than any staff course ever could.

"To lose such a man while on operations is a considerable blow. But it is blow that will not discourage us. We have been moulded into an effective team by a great leader who would have wanted us to complete our task in Afghanistan. It is a task that he passionately believed in and we will not let him down in the relentless pursuit of the goals that he set us.

"His wife Sally and his two daughters Hannah and Sophie are in our thoughts and prayers because our loss, although great, is nothing in comparison to theirs."

Major Guy Stone, one of the Company Commanders, said:

"Lieutenant Colonel Rupert Thorneloe was not only a truly great friend but an outstanding man for whom to work. He was kind, very thoughtful, utterly decent and someone who had complete loyalty from and deep admiration of all his Company Commanders. He was the perfect military guide for us all and there was no better moral compass. He would always listen and never

forgot a thing. He adored the Welsh Guards: the Regiment, the Battalion but especially his Guardsmen. We knew, as a Battalion warned for Afghanistan, that we were in very best of hands. His great intellect, thoroughness and deep care for those under his command gave us huge confidence. He never missed a trick and he was even always one step ahead of the most mischievous Guardsman. He amazed us with his enviable capacity for work. We all know that Colonel Rupert's reputation was undoubted from the highest echelons of the Army, and indeed the Government having worked closely for the Secretary of State for Defence. But above all this, and what hurts most of all, is that he was a very loving husband to Sally and father to Hannah and Sophie. I had the very deepest respect for him and I will miss him enormously, but now he would now want us to continue with added determination and drive with his cry 'all of one Company'."

Major Martyn Miles, the Battle Group Logistics Officer, said:

"Lieutenant Colonel Rupert Thorneloe MBE was a superb Welsh Guardsman who loved his Battalion. He died leading his men from the front, and I for one have felt his loss enormously having served with him on many occasions including beside him as the Regimental Sergeant Major when he held the appointment of Adjutant.

"Since our arrival in Helmand Province, the Battle Group has achieved amazing things under the command of Colonel Rupert. He was confident that within our time we would increase and deepen security within our area of responsibility (AOR).

"Col Rupert was a great soldier himself, and a great leader of men, an example to other Commanding Officers. Every incident that happened with our AOR he praised his men for their professionalism and dedication to duty and encouraged them to carry on.

"The Battalion will now carry on as he would have wanted us to do, as a family Regiment. We will draw from the great strength within using pride, determination and the love for the Commanding Officer. We will drive forward to achieve the objectives that he felt so passionate about.

"He will be truly missed by all ranks that were lucky enough to serve under his Command.

"My thoughts and prayers are with Sally and the two young daughters Hannah and Sophie. God Bless."

Captain James Aldridge, the Adjutant, said:

"Being Colonel Rupert's Adjutant was hard work, but it was also very rewarding. There were many late nights, but I had the privilege of watching and learning from a highly capable man. He demanded the highest standards from those under his command, but justifiably, as he also set the highest standards himself. He would never take the easy option, but would always spend the extra time to work out what the best solution would be for the Battalion, and also for the individuals concerned. He could not have been prouder of the Regiment, nor cared more deeply for its members. He would never have asked anyone to do anything he was not prepared to do

himself, and he died doing just that - leading from the front. He will be sorely missed by the Battalion, and all who knew him."

Captain Ed Launders, the Operations Officer, said:

"Lieutenant Colonel Thorneloe was a man apart; he combined an astute military brain with real compassion for the men under his command and a unique ability to spot opportunities where others would not. He led the 1st Battalion Welsh Guards Battle Group with the steadiest of hands in often the most difficult of circumstances; he was utterly committed to his men, and to bringing about lasting improvement to the lives of the people of Afghanistan.

"I have served under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Thorneloe as a platoon commander in his company, and as his operations officer in Afghanistan. It has been a real privilege to witness a true master at work. His intelligence and imagination, combined with selfless determination, left the rest of us in his wake. His humanity and good humour means that he will leave behind a happy and bonded team with an utter determination to succeed.

"I will remember him for his kindness, humour and ability to get the very best out of his team. He will be sorely missed."

Warrant Officer Class I (Regimental Sergeant Major) Michael Monaghan said:

"Words can not express the sadness that has been felt by the loss of the Commanding Officer. My immediate thoughts are for his family and they have my deepest sympathy. I knew the Commanding Officer since he was a young Platoon Commander and the first encounter I had with him was as a result of his considerable qualities as an Officer when he was selected to lead the Battalion's team for the Cambrian Patrol Competition. The Commanding Officer was the ultimate professional in everything he did and no stone was left unturned in his quest to ensure that everything was done correctly in order to improve the lives, more often than not at the expense of his personal life, of the men in their careers and personal circumstances. The Commanding Officer was an extremely talented leader and was the kind of man that you would follow anywhere knowing that you were in very capable hands. He will be greatly missed by all of the Battalion and I will always remember him for everything that he did for the men and the kindness that he showed to everybody. He was a truly great man."