



1ST BATTALION THE ROYAL GHURKA RIFLES

Major Josh Bowman was 34 years old and from Salisbury. He started his career in the British Army as a rifle platoon commander in B Company 1st Battalion The Light Infantry having commissioned from the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst in 1999.

As a rifle platoon commander he deployed to Northern Ireland as part of the Rural Reinforcement Battalion.

In Northern Ireland he operated from an isolated patrol base and for his outstanding performance throughout this tour he was awarded a General Officer Commanding Northern Ireland commendation.

Following rifle platoon command he was posted as an instructor to the 3rd Battalion Infantry Training Centre in Catterick.

He then returned to regimental duty in Paderborn, Germany, in the Armoured Infantry role as the Second in Command of D Company 1 Light Infantry.

He deployed on Op TELIC 3 to Maysan Province, Iraq, before then taking command of the Mortar Platoon.

It was following his Mortar Platoon appointment that Major Bowman began to broaden his horizons with numerous overseas postings.

From August 2005 he completed a year in International Military Advisory Training Team (Freetown) Sierra Leone as the Operations Training Officer / Battalion Operations Advisor.

In September 2006 he returned to the UK as an SO3 instructor in the Junior Officer Tactics Division to the Land Warfare Centre in Warminster.

On completion of his two year appointment he had been selected for promotion to Major.

Prior to attendance on the Intermediate Command and Staff Course (Land) he squeezed in a 5 month tour as the Assistant Chief Instructor at the Iraqi Military Academy Ar Rustamiyah (IMAR).

This was an 8 man training team supporting 600 Officer Cadets and 300 Iraqi Staff.

Major Bowman began his company command with 1st Battalion The Royal Gurkha Rifles in May 2009 immediately after ICSC(L), swapping the lecture halls of Shrivenham for the heat and humidity of Brunei.

In August 2009 the Battalion conducted the Unit Move from Brunei to the UK and began the pre-deployment training for the Op HERRICK 12 deployment.

His Gurkha soldiers developed a natural respect and affection for a leader who balanced the best traditions of a rifle regiment soldier with humanity and hospitality that found him at home in A (Delhi) Company.

Major Bowman had led his company through some of the toughest fighting experienced by the Battlegroup on Op HERRICK 12 thus far.

He balanced the softer side of population centric counter insurgency with a genuine ability to motivate and lead his company onto the offensive when required.

But above all, he was a gentle and thoroughly good man, who often spoke of his family and his girlfriend, Lucy. Our thoughts and prayers are with them all during these tragic times.

Major Bowman's family said:

"He was the best possible son and brother who will be sadly missed by his family and many friends.

"He loved the Army and was very proud of the selfless work that he and his Company were doing."

Lieutenant Colonel Gerald Strickland MBE, Commanding Officer 1st Battalion The Royal Gurkha Rifles, Combined Forces Nahr-e-Saraj South said:

"Our Battalion has lost a brave leader. Major Josh Bowman commanded A Company with a rare determination.

"The tragedy of his loss is beyond words. Since his arrival in Afghanistan, he led his Company deep into enemy controlled territory again and again.

"It is a bitter irony that after driving the insurgents back throughout his area, he was gunned down as he slept in the supposed security of his patrol base.

"Attached to the Royal Gurkha Rifles for two years, Josh is now forever one of our Regimental family.

"Here in Afghanistan, he lifted us all daily as he concluded his reports of his company's activity with a quick quip, be that a ping pong challenge to the Brigade Commander on their makeshift table, or his plans for yet another curry supper.

"I learnt very quickly out here that I could rely on him implicitly, and that he would unflinchingly head straight towards danger if that was what was required.

"He was truly courageous. We will desperately miss his light touch, his cheerful demeanour, and his love of his soldiers, even if it was tinged with constant puzzlement about the weird and wonderful ways of the Gurkhas.

"We grieve for his loss, and share a small part of the burden of pain felt by his loved ones.

"But while we do so, we will forge ahead and continue what he started, because that is what he would have wanted."

Major Charlie Crowe, Officer Commanding B (Sari Bair) Company, 1st Battalion The Royal Gurkha Rifles said:

"Josh, you joined the Battalion in preparation for this operational tour and I was delighted to hear that my number one (same intake) from Sandhurst and the Platoon Commanders' Battle Course would be a fellow company commander.

"Knowing Josh and his eccentricities, I knew that the Royal Gurkha Rifles Officers' Mess was the right place for him.

"I know he made his mark in A (Delhi) Company and in the Mess and I was looking forward to rekindling a friendship which has lapsed as our service had taken us to different parts of the world.

"Josh's brutal and untimely death is bitter – so much promise left unfulfilled and a great character taken from our close Royal Gurkha Rifles family.

"Josh, I never had the opportunity to enjoy your company within the Battalion environment and I bitterly regret it.

"Your place in Regimental history, your leadership and love of A (Delhi) Company will never be forgotten. Jai 1 RGR."

Captain Richard Thatcher RIFLES, Motorised Transport Officer, 1st Battalion The Royal Gurkha Rifles said:

"A man of great warmth, friendly spirit and a part of the fabric of the Battalion adding value to where it mattered.

"Nothing ever seemed to be too much for you, taking everything in your stride with confidence as a true Rifles Officer.

"Professional and conscientious to the end, you had much more to offer to aspiring young Officers and soldiers alike.

"Our single living out Officers 'Come Dine With Me' dinner nights will no longer seem the same without your presence at our table, and neither will your taste in expensive red wine or smelly cheese ever be matched.

"In the time that I have known you, as a fellow Rifles Officer, you have been a loyal and trusted friend, who will be very sadly missed by all that have had the pleasure of being a part of your life.

"You may be a fallen Rifleman, but you will never be forgotten.

"Swift and Bold"

Captain PRW Kaye KRH, attached officer from the King's Royal Hussars to 1st Battalion The Royal Gurkha Rifles said:

"I feel extremely privileged to have known Josh for the past eleven months.

"He was a gentleman through and through and possessed an extremely positive outlook on life.

"We had a common bond in that we were both attached Officers' serving in the 1st Battalion, The Royal Gurkha Rifles.

"Josh was undoubtedly in his absolute element in Afghanistan, and spoke of his infamous Company operations fighting through various insurgent compounds, as if he were out for a walk in England's green hills.

"Dropping into his patrol base was always a pleasure, for he was so hospitable, and nothing was ever any trouble for him.

"There always appeared to be a goat or chicken in the pot, and he would love to talk of England and weekends spent deer stalking, or the unsung qualities of pigeon shooting.

"Josh visibly thrived off the challenge of soldiering in such a demanding environment and inspired confidence in those around him.

"His enthusiasm made you want to get out and be a part of his operation, even if you were the other end of the area.

"His death is a tragic loss and our thoughts are with his family and girlfriend over this horrendously difficult period."

Sergeant Manoj Gurung, Company TAC Commander and Intelligence Sergeant, A (Delhi)

Company, 1st Battalion The Royal Gurkha Rifles said:

"Major Bowman was a true hero to me and for all members of A (Delhi) Company.

"He always involved himself to the highest level in all that went on in A Company.

"He led from the front without failure. He was a very generous man and was so kind to everybody he met and worked with.

"He had time to talk to everybody especially the junior riflemen.

"We have so many fond memories of him which will never be forgotten.

"You are sorely missed by all of your Company."