

C (Essex) Company, 1st Battalion The Royal Anglian Regiment (The Vikings)

Private Robert Hayes was killed as a result of an IED explosion on 3rd January 2010. He was conducting a security patrol south of Check Point Paraang in Southern Nad-e'Ali, Helmand Province. He had deployed to Afghanistan with C (Essex) Company, 1st Battalion The Royal Anglian Regiment (The Vikings), attached to the 1st Battalion Grenadier Guards Battle Group.

Private Hayes was a Rifleman within 6 Platoon, C (Essex) Company. He was responsible for providing assistance and security to the local population which included conducting patrols to disrupt insurgent activity in one of Helmand Province's most challenging and dangerous areas.

Private Hayes was born Cambridge on 09 May 1990, and grew up there. He completed his training at the Infantry Training Centre, Catterick on 02 March 2009, aged 18, and joined the 'Vikings' shortly afterwards. Before deploying to Afghanistan Private Hayes completed a number of demanding exercises in the United Kingdom and convincingly won his weight category during the Battalion's 2009 Inter-Company Boxing Championships.

In a very short period of time Private Hayes proved himself to be a hugely professional and talented soldier. He was courageous, thoughtful and well liked by all those that served alongside him. Without doubt he had the personal attributes and raw potential to have a full and successful career in the Army.

Lieutenant Colonel James Woodham MC, Commanding Officer, 1st Battalion The Royal Anglian Regiment said:

"I was shocked and saddened to the core to learn of the death of Private Robert Hayes killed today in the Nad-e'Ali district. He died whilst on patrol in an area that has seen some of the most intense fighting with the insurgents that seek to undermine the Afghan Government. In the past 2 months, he and his platoon have given their all to deliver a secure environment for the people of Nad-e'Ali in what are some of the most demanding of conditions. Robert's death leaves a huge hole in The Vikings' ranks; he will be remembered as a trusted member of the team, a young man whose energy for life was contagious, for his bravery and sense of humour. Robert was young man who made a real difference in his short time with the Battalion – he has been taken from us and we are all the poorer for his passing. I know that all members of The Vikings will join me in offering our thoughts and prayers to Robert's family and friends. He will be remembered forever more."

Major Christopher Davies, Officer Commanding, C (Essex) Company said:

"The tragic loss of such a young, gifted and promising member of C Company is deeply saddening. Although he had only been in the Army for just over a year, Private Robert Hayes was quick to make his own mark and as a result became widely recognised across the Battalion as an extremely capable soldier, brave comrade and talented boxer. He fully accepted his role in Afghanistan and ensured that his personal contribution to the mission

made a genuine difference. For over two months he was involved in heavy and relentless fighting against insurgents and always acted in a courageous, decisive and selfless manner. The considerate way in which he interacted with the local population was synonymous with someone who was genuinely decent and wanted betterment for those less fortunate than himself. Private Robert Hayes was immensely popular and sacrificed his life doing something that he truly believed in. His loss is widely felt across all ranks within the Company and our thoughts at this awful time remain firmly with his family and loved ones at home for whom the pain will be immeasurable."

Second Lieutenant Dan Benstead, 6 Platoon Commander, C (Essex) Company said:

"Private Hayes was a stalwart of 6 Platoon. Despite only being in the Army a short time he was a supremely confident soldier and loved being on operations. He had endless energy, a wicked sense of humour and was always involved in any Platoon pranks. He was extremely popular with his peers and could often be found laughing and joking with them. Private Hayes was a huge asset to the Platoon and he will be sorely missed by all of the Mighty VI. No words can explain the utter devastation I feel for his family. My thoughts are with them and I only hope they can draw solace from his passion and belief in the job he was doing."

Sergeant Ryan Vickery, 6 Platoon Sergeant, C (Essex) Company said:

"Private Hayes was an essential member of 6 Platoon; he was always motivated and always conducted himself as a professional soldier. He was extremely proactive and never showed any signs of fear when engaged with the enemy. Robert is the type of character you can not help but like and being in his company was nothing short of a pleasure. Although Robert is no longer with us, he will never leave our minds and will now join his Viking brothers. Our thoughts are with his family at this time of bereavement and our words are not enough when it comes to describing one of our own. Robert Hayes; a Viking, a friend, a brother and a sad loss; rest forever in peace."

Private Daniel Greenland, a close friend said:

"Private Robert Hayes was one of the funniest blokes I knew. Whenever I saw him he always had a smile on his face. I had only known Rob a short while as he was fairly new in the Regiment but he was a massive personality in 6 Platoon. I have never met someone as motivated and brave. He was a great soldier and an even better friend. You will never be forgotten. See you on the other side mate."

Private Mathew Arrowsmith, a close friend said:

"A true friend has been taken from us and we hope you are in a better place mate. We will never be the same again. Words cannot describe how we feel. You'll never be forgotten. A true VI. RIP."

Private Jason Field, a close friend said:

"Private Robert Hayes was one of my closest friends. He always walked around with a smile on his face. I'll never forget the fun times we have shared together such as boxing training and our week in Newquay. I shall miss him dearly and never forget his smile."