



Rifleman Aidan Howell
3rd Battalion, The Rifles

Rifleman Aidan Howell of 3rd Battalion, The Rifles was killed as a result of an explosion that happened near Forward Operating Base Zeebrugge, in the Kajaki area of Helmand Province, during the afternoon of 28 December 2009. He had been on patrol when an improvised explosive device detonated.

Aidan Howell was born in Sidcup, Kent on 25 June 1990 and went to the Montsaye Community College in Rothwell before enlisting to join the Army in 2006. He was selected to attend the Army Foundation College in Harrogate before completing his training at the Infantry Training Centre in Catterick. In March 2008 he joined C Company, 3 RIFLES based in Edinburgh.

Known to friends as 'H', he completed his Pre- D employment Training with C Company as part of the specialised Fire Support Group, a role normally reserved for more senior Rifleman. An extremely fit and active young man he was an avid Leeds United supporter, travelling far and wide to cheer them on whenever he could.

Lieutenant Colonel Nick Kitson, Commanding Officer 3 RIFLES Battle Group, said:
"Rifleman Howell, at the age of 19, was already established as a man of promise. His infectious humour and engaging personality had quickly endeared him to his Company and his Platoon.

"Despite being a relatively new arrival to the battalion, he was already operating with the C Company Fire Support Group which demands the experience and ability of our older Riflemen. In this he found no difficulty and held his head high, belying his tender years.

"His loss is a tragedy and he goes to join a line of gallant Riflemen who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the service of their country and their mates out here in Afghanistan. Those who remain here will take strength from his courage and dedication and will honour his memory always.

"At this most difficult of times our thoughts and prayers go out to his family and friends. We know that they, like us, will find some comfort in the knowledge that he died doing the job he loved and whilst bringing peace and stability to this troubled region."

Captain Ben Morgan, Fire Support Group Commander, C Company Group, 3 RIFLES, said:
"Rifleman Aidan Howell joined the Fire Support Group in March 2009 for the hectic six months Pre-Deployment Training and threw himself into it whole-heartedly.

"A very social young Rifleman he always had a smile on his face that made you wonder what he'd been up to the night before! Other soldiers were drawn to his confidence and he was part of a tight knit band of brothers eagerly making holiday plans for when the tour was over.

"A tall man, he used his height to look out for others, a trait that made him a leader amongst men and stayed with him right to the very end.

"On the day of his death a British newspaper arrived with messages of Christmas wishes from loved ones back in the UK. Where most people had one or two messages Aidan had more than anyone else. He leaves a gaping hole in the lives of many and our hearts go out to his bereaved family at this terrible moment.

"To have served alongside him in Afghanistan was an honour and he will be remembered by us all as a hero."

Rifleman Toby Graham, fellow Rifleman, said:

"'H' was an all round good soldier, the only thing that let him down was the moustache he failed to grow on tour! We were really good mates and went through some tough times out here but that's when you really get to know someone and Aidan was a friend for life.

"The good times we shared back in the UK were always full of banter and it was never a dull moment when we went out together. He will be missed amongst the Fire Support Group and the Battalion, gone but never forgotten."

Rifleman Dean Jackson, fellow Rifleman, said:

"'H' will be sorely missed amongst all the blokes. He was a good squaddie and an even better friend. I'll miss his jokes and his banter. I'll miss his talks about Leeds United and the things he got up to. I'll miss our gym sessions and talk of next summers plans.

"Dearly missed and never forgotten. RIP Aidan."