

Rifleman Andrew Fentiman

7 RIFLES

Rifleman Andrew Ian Fentiman from 7th Battalion The Rifles (7 RIFLES, a Territorial Army battalion), attached to the 3 RIFLES Battle Group, was killed as a result of small arms fire whilst on a foot patrol near Sangin in central Helmand province during the morning of 15 November 2009.

Rifleman Andrew Ian Fentiman was born in Cambridge on 29 July 1986. He joined 7 RIFLES as a Potential Officer in 2007 following two years at East Midlands Officer Training Corps. Having volunteered to serve with 3 RIFLES Battlegroup, he completed an assault pioneer course in May before being mobilised in June 2009.

Rifleman Fentiman attended training at the Reserves Training and Mobilisation Centre, in Chilwell before joining A Company 3 RIFLES during Pre-Deployment Training. He quickly proved his mettle, earning high praise from OPTAG training staff for his reactions during a demanding exercise in Norfolk.

In civilian life, he read Mechanical Engineering at the University of Leicester before becoming a regional sales manager for Team Studio Ltd, a software firm based in Huntingdon. He intended to return to his civilian job after he had completed his tour of duty.

Rifleman Fentiman was killed by enemy fire during a foot patrol in Sangin, Afghanistan. The patrol was tasked with interdicting enemy activity and reassuring local nationals. He leaves his parents, Kevin and Lynda, a brother, Adam and a sister, Elizabeth.

Lieutenant Colonel Nick Kitson, Commanding 3 RIFLES Battle Group, said:

"Rifleman Andrew Fentiman was one of the welcome volunteers from our Territorial Army brethren, in this case 7 RIFLES, who have answered the call to come out to Afghanistan with us. It was an honour and a great act of commitment that he chose to accompany us and share the burden.

"A real ambassador for the great British public that supports us so well, he was up for the challenge and gave of himself selflessly. A university graduate, he was something of a novelty to his platoon. Bright and enthusiastic he fitted in instantly. I have infinite respect for the commitment and sacrifice of this brave Rifleman who had so many opportunities ahead of him yet chose first to serve his country and his regiment. He was liked and respected by all and will be sorely missed as he now makes his way home to his family. Our thoughts are with them and all of his loved ones at this most difficult time."

Lieutenant Colonel Paul Uden, Commanding Officer 7 RIFLES, said:

"The loss of Rifleman Andrew Fentiman is a terrible shock to everyone in the Battalion. My thoughts and those of the entire Battalion, are very much with Rifleman Fentiman's family at this dreadful time.

"He was a young man of 23 who played a full role as a TA infantryman, and was a popular and committed member of E Company, 7 RIFLES.

"I spoke to him before pre-deployment training about his hopes for the future and his desire to eventually commission. He went to Afghanistan to gain experience as a first step to achieving his goal of commissioning and I have no doubt that he would have made a very good Officer. He was keen, committed and determined to succeed."

Major Tim Harris, OC A Company 3 RIFLES, said of him:

"Rifleman Andrew Fentiman, or Fen as he was known to us, had been with A Company since June 2009. He joined us during our pre-deployment training in Kent and was instantly liked by all who met him. During our first conversation, it was obvious to me that here was a young man brimming with confidence and oozing with charm.

"Having studied at the University of Leicester he was naturally brighter than the average Rifleman, but he was quickly accepted as 'one of the boys' in 1 Platoon, who good-naturedly ribbed him for being 'posh' as they saw it. In reality, he had no airs or graces. He was prepared to endure the same privations and do the same job as everyone else – and that is why we loved him.

"He made an indelible mark on everyone in A Company; we could all see that he was a man with considerable potential. A volunteer, he was a walking advertisement for all that is fine about our Territorial Army – he signed up to serve his country and perhaps, to seek adventure. But he was a crucial and integral part of the team, I never saw him without a big smile on his face, and we are devastated that he is no longer with us. However, we know that our loss is nothing compared to the loss that will be felt by his family and friends, and I hope that in time they can find a crumb of comfort in the knowledge that he died with his friends around him doing a job he relished.

"Rifleman Fentiman will be sorely missed by A Company, but his loss will only serve to deepen our resolve to succeed in our mission. It will not be easy, but we will take inspiration from his courage. We will never forget his sacrifice."

Major Michael Scott-Hyde, OC E Company 7 RIFLES, said:

"Rifleman Andrew Fentiman was a highly committed member of E Company 7 RIFLES travelling a considerable distance to attend training and setting an example to his fellow Riflemen. His determined and friendly manner ensured that he was a popular member of the Company. His aspiration was to be commissioned, consequently he took every opportunity to

develop himself as an infantry soldier in preparation for Potential Officer training and continuing that which he had started, whilst at East Midlands University Officer Training Corps.

"However, he believed that participation in an operational tour would enhance his suitability for Commissioning and he put his civilian career on hold to achieve this. He was so determined to deploy with 3 RIFLES that he completed a challenging Assault Pioneer cadre to ensure his acceptance.

"E Company has a notable record of operational service and we were proud of Andrew when he volunteered to continue that tradition and we are proud of him today. He will be sorely missed by all members of E Company. He was one of ours and he will never be forgotten.

"Our thoughts and prayers are with all those who were close to him, his family, his friends and his fellow Riflemen.

"Swift and Bold"

Lieutenant Ben Heap, 7 RIFLES paid this tribute:

"A likeable young man who had made a clear decision that he wanted to complete an operational tour by committing to train as a Rifleman by giving up his job - on the face of it an unlikely character to become an infanteer, he was very focussed on serving in the army and worked hard to reach the standard required in order to deploy with 3 RIFLES.

"He had a kind, gentle and cheerful manner and showed great consideration for others in everything he did. He was obviously happiest most when working alongside his section in the most challenging of circumstances, while still remaining to be a source of morale in the face of adversity. He died alongside his friends doing a job he loved."

Second Lieutenant Connor Maxwell, 1 Platoon Commander, said:

"I can remember my first talk with Rifleman Fentiman. He was in a bad way after having a really good night out before joining us. This was him all over. Always up for a laugh, a cheery character who always remained upbeat, he simply made it easy for everyone to like him. Although he was not a regular soldier, I only ever saw him as one of us. He was always professional and was a true asset to the platoon. He paid the ultimate sacrifice doing something he loved. I have complete respect for him. My heart goes out to all of the loved ones he left behind."

Serjeant Steven Smith, 1 Platoon Serjeant, said:

"As a Platoon Serjeant, it was my responsibility to get people ready for the tour and even more so for the lads who joined so close before we came here. This included Fen, who had the extra pressure of coming in late and fitting in with the Platoon. From my point of view, it was easy with Fen, because of his enthusiasm and willingness to leave his job to come to Afghanistan with us. Even though Fen's background was different from most, he was always eager to fit in, took all

the banter a rifle Platoon dishes out and it did not take long for him to fit in. I have the utmost admiration for him."

Corporal Phillip Cree, Section Commander, said:

"Rifleman Fentiman had only been with me for around 5 months, after making the huge jump from being a civvie to a full time soldier on tour. He found the transition hard at first, but really started to just become one of the lads. He must have had a great passion for this job, after leaving his office chat to be with us. He was always upbeat and provided good morale for the blokes. So long Fen, you will be missed."

Lance Corporal Mathew Davies, Section Second in Command added:

"To come to Afghanistan as a soldier takes courage, to volunteer takes more so. A constant source of morale for the lads, with his cheerful and unique demeanour. He will be sorely missed."

Rifleman Connor McDarby said:

"Fen put the effort in to mix with us all us from day 1. He was always positive even when things were bad. If you asked for help he would always be there for you, and would give his own input and innovation. See you later mate, you will never be forgotten."