

3RD BATTALION THE RIFLES

Rifleman Daniel 'Danny' Holkham was born in Chatham on 2 August 1990. He attended Minster College in Sheerness achieving an NVQ in engineering before enlisting to join the Army at the age of sixteen.

Rifleman Holkham gained a place at the Army Foundation College in Harrogate where he completed his phase one training prior to going to the Infantry Training Centre, Catterick for his Infantry specific education.

On completion in April 2008 he joined 3 RIFLES in Edinburgh and was posted to 4 Platoon, B Company.

He took part in the Battalion exercise in Kenya later that year and then the pre-deployment build up training for operations in Afghanistan throughout 2009.

Rifleman Holkham deployed to Afghanistan in September 2009 and was working with his Platoon from a patrol base in central Sangin to provide security and development to the local people.

He was killed on 27 March 2010 when he stopped a suicide bomber who then detonated a device just outside the Sangin Bazaar.

Rifleman Holkham leaves behind his parents Rodney and Tracy, his girlfriend Nikki, and his two brothers Andrew and Matthew who are both serving with 3 RIFLES.

Rifleman Holkham's family said:

"The loss of our son Danny has left a huge hole in our lives and that of his brothers and friends that can never again be filled. He served his country faithfully and with great pride."

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

"Daniel Holkham was a model Rifleman; robust, bright and dedicated, he was everything a commander could hope for and more. Joining us a year before our build up training for this deployment, he had ample opportunity to show that he had both quality and potential in abundance.

"There is no doubt that a bright future lay ahead of this young man and it is a tragedy that he has been robbed of the opportunity to fulfil it.

"Rifleman Holkham was well established as the lead man in his patrol, responsible for searching

the ground for buried explosive devices to allow his patrol to pass safely.

"The selflessness and professionalism required to carry out this task, day after day, in the most challenging of environments, is one of the most humbling things to witness.

"Rifleman Holkham carried out this task diligently, willingly and with plenty of professional pride, such was his dedication to his fellow Riflemen. He died at the head of his patrol, another unquestioningly courageous Rifleman intercepting a crazed suicide bomber before he could cause havoc in the Sangin bazaar.

"The loss of a Rifleman so full of promise is a devastating blow to the Battle Group but we will draw inspiration from his example and continue undeterred in carrying out the valuable work for which he laid down his life.

"The thoughts and prayers of this whole Battle Group are very much with his family at this most difficult time. We know that they remember him, as we do, with happiness and pride. We all draw comfort and inspiration from his honoured memory."

Major James Richardson, Officer Commanding, B Company 3 RIFLES said:

"Rifleman 'Snake Eyes' Holkham had arrived in the Company only a short time before me. It was obvious that he was very new, still slightly 'caught in the headlights', by the transition from Catterick to 'real life' in the Battalion.

"Over the months and the journeys to the Falklands, Kenya, through pre-deployment training and into Afghanistan, the experiences he had alongside the people who were now his friends gave him the kind of confidence that I, as a commander, need my Riflemen to have.

"It is a confidence, on the edge of cockiness that says I now know my craft, am pretty good at it, and am surrounded by people I trust and who trust me.

"It wasn't necessarily an easy journey for him. Not a natural athlete, he was often to be seen puffing and groaning his way up 'Brown Track' bent strangely double under his bergan thinking that such an awkward position was preferable to standing up straight and sucking in the Scottish air.

"But there came a moment, I cannot recall it exactly, when he was walking past and his Platoon Serjeant, Serjeant Bowe, said 'hey, Snake Eyes....(and gave him some typically robust instruction).' I knew then that he had turned the corner, he had made it.

"No longer was he the junior Rifleman, lacking in confidence. He must have made it, he had a nickname, and not a derisory one either. We heard more and more of his wit, adding his two pennies' worth to the banter more and more – Kent biting through the less spiky tones of those from the North East and Yorkshire.

"His progress thereafter was always upward and by the time we deployed to Helmand, he was

one of the 'go to' Riflemen in 4 Platoon, a 'Vallon man' no less, trusted with leading his mates through the maze of alleyways searching out the IEDs that were a persistent and consistent threat, a role requiring extraordinary physical and mental endurance and courage, and which he had fulfilled for nigh on six months unbroken.

"He will be missed terribly by those in his Platoon. I will miss him, because he grew up in the two years of my tenure and I have clear images and fond memories of the changes in him as time went on. But our sadness pales into insignificance alongside that of his two brothers serving with the Battalion in Afghanistan and his parents. Our thoughts are with them now."

Lieutenant Dan Brown, 4 Platoon Commander, B Company 3 RIFLES said:

"Rifleman Dan Holkham joined the platoon just as I assumed command and in the 2 years I have had the privilege of working with him I have seen a young, unostentatious, individual grow into a confident, courageous soldier who epitomised what it means to be a Rifleman.

"Initially reserved, he soon found his feet within the Platoon and as his confidence grew, so did his cockiness; he always had an answer for everything, even when one was not required!

"But it was his cockiness that would stand him out as one of the most trusted and courageous men within the Platoon. As a Barma man he was always at the forefront of every patrol, clearing the way for his fellow men to move through.

"During our six months out here he found numerous IEDs that undoubtedly saved the lives of many others; his latest find only hours before his tragic death.

"Such was his eye for IEDs that he became the most trusted Barma man within the platoon. Whenever he would say "IED find" everyone knew it was definitely an IED.

"His jovial character coupled with his cheeky streak marked him out as one of the characters of the Platoon with a bright future ahead. Utterly professional and extremely capable Rifleman Holkham was the kind of person that every soldier would want by their side.

"His selfless commitment, courage and cheeky grin will be a lasting memory. We have lost an outstanding soldier but our loss is nothing compared to that of his family and girlfriend, my thoughts and prayers are with them at this most difficult of times."

Warrant Officer Class 2 Paul Kelly, Company Serjeant Major, B Company 3 RIFLES said:

"I've have known Rifleman "Snakes eyes" Holkham for the few years he was in the Battalion, I called him snakes eyes because of the light coloured piercing eyes he had, the nick name did stick with him which he didn't seem to mind. "Snakes eyes" was a quiet, and reserved Rifleman when he first joined which I found strange because he was a "Cockney" and I always associated "Cockneys" with being loud.

"That quietness didn't last for long, as his confidence grew, so it seemed did his personality and

his character. He was one of the Platoon's characters without doubt, always ready and up for a laugh and that laughter will be bitterly missed.

"The biggest testament any one could give him was that he was trusted amongst the Platoon to lead and clear safe routes through the dangerous alleyways and tracks in the Sangin AO.

"He stood strong and took this task on with out fear, but happy in the knowledge that he was making this safe for not only his mates but for the wider Afghan people. His loss has hit us all very hard but our thoughts must be with his family at this very difficult time."

Serjeant Paul Bowe, 4 Platoon Serjeant, B Company 3 RIFLES said:

"I have known Rifleman Holkham (Holks) since he arrived at the battalion. From the start I could see he was a bright star for the future, with a very cheeky personality, he had always had something to say in his wide boy accent.

"I didn't realise how brave young men of today's society are, until I deployed to Afghanistan and saw Rifleman Holkham at work.

"He was a lead member of 3 Section and showed great courage everyday. He had cleared four IED's in one area of Sangin, without hesitation showing nerves of steel.

"Rifleman Holkham loved his family and girlfriend very much and will be sorely missed by those who were lucky enough to meet him."

Corporal David Stroud, 4 Platoon, B Company 3 RIFLES said:

"I can remember Holks turning up to the Battalion and as a Section Commander in 4 Platoon, I thought what a breath of fresh air he was.

"Never had to be told to do anything and was always on top form just as you would expect from a top Rifleman.

"Always had something to say, 9 times out of 10 being one of his cheeky comments.

"As a Section Commander he was always one of the blokes you would like to have in your Section, nerves of steel and slick drills as he proved to the Platoon on several times in contact and confirming numerous IEDs.

"A big hole has been left in the Platoon he will be greatly missed."

Lance Corporal Ryan Le-Masurier, 4 Platoon, B Company 3 RIFLES said:

"Rifleman Holkham was a very lively character who liked to torment his peers, in a good way of course. Danny AKA Dave was always up for a laugh and was always winding us all up.

"He was the most trustworthy Rifleman in the Platoon, hence the reason for him being the first man.

"A very straight talking and no nonsense type of guy, he wasn't too shy to voice his opinion should he disagree with something. He always spoke highly of his family including his brothers and his girlfriend back home."

Lance Corporal James Ashley, 4 Platoon, B Company 3 RIFLES said:

"I have known Rifleman Holkham since I joined B Company, he was a top bloke and he will be missed by all, our thoughts are with his brothers and family."

Lance Corporal Liam Raine, 4 Platoon, B Company 3 RIFLES said:

"Can't believe Holks is gone, he was a good friend and an excellent squaddie, and my thoughts go to his family."

Lance Corporal Daniel Ward, 4 Platoon, B Company 3 RIFLES said:

"Holkham, known as Dave with the lads, was just one of them lads you loved best. He tried to make himself scary but you know he was soft, he will be missed, my thoughts go to Matt and Andy his brothers and the rest of his family and also Nikki his girlfriend. RIP Dave."

Rifleman Daniel Stead, 4 Platoon, B Company 3 RIFLES said:

"Rifleman Holkham (Danny) was the joker in the pack. He was always very loud with that distinctive Kent Cockney accent you'd always associate with the Holkhams."

Rifleman Ben Lennon, 4 Platoon, B Company 3 RIFLES said:

"Rifleman Holkham was a very gobby and energetic character who always spoke his mind. He was a good lad who was always up for a laugh. He had a mint nickname "Evil" because of his eyes that would stare and generally look evil, not in a menacing way of course. He always played a lot of jokes on people."

Private Natalie Newton, Platoon Medic, 4 Platoon, B Company 3 RIFLES said:

"I have known Rifleman Holkham since the start of this tour. Holks always had banter where ever he was out on the ground or in the PB, he was the life and soul of 3 Section. It's been a pleasure to have known such a brave Rifleman. He will be missed by everyone who knew him."

Rifleman Martin Dawson, 4 Platoon, B Company 3 RIFLES said:

"Rifleman Holkham was one of the top blokes in the Platoon, full of character always up for a laugh but on the ground a true professional. I would have followed him anywhere, gone but never forgotten."

Rifleman Galandou Goode, 4 Platoon, B Company 3 RIFLES said:

"Holkham was one of the best lads in the Platoon, he loved his job very much. He will never be forgotten in our hearts or thoughts. We are going to miss you big Holks, RIP."

Rifleman Damien Hines, 4 Platoon, B Company 3 RIFLES said:

"I remember Dan first arriving at the Battalion, I gave him a lift home, the whole three hour journey drive he never spoke a word, but now shutting him up was the problem! Dan was a truly great soldier, brave, professional just a top lad in general, I will miss our little chats about home, RIP mate."

Rifleman Joshua Martin, 4 Platoon, B Company 3 RIFLES said:

"You were a great Rifleman and a good lad. I won't forget your courage, you will be missed mate."

Rifleman Michael Painter, 4 Platoon, B Company 3 RIFLES said:

"Gutted you're gone mate, the Section is not going to be the same without you, missing you already."

Rifleman Luke Pawson, 4 Platoon, B Company 3 RIFLES said:

"Daniel "Dave" Holkham was one of the best, most switched on blokes I've ever met. No-one ever had a bad word to say about him. He will be sorely missed and our thoughts are with his brothers and family. Rest in Peace mate."

Rifleman Alexander Plant, 4 Platoon, B Company 3 RIFLES said:

"Top bloke and an outstanding soldier / Barma man. 4 Platoon have lost another great warrior. You will be sorely missed RIP mate."

Rifleman James Reeves, 4 Platoon, B Company 3 RIFLES said:

"Holkham was a good man and a great soldier, the heart of the Platoon, he will be missed."

Rifleman Ryan Scott, 4 Platoon, B Company 3 RIFLES said:

"One of 4 Platoon's finest blokes a Barma man through and through, gone but never forgotten."

Rifleman Jem Smale, 4 Platoon, B Company 3 RIFLES said:

"Holkham you will always be with us in our hearts, never forgotten, a truly brave soldier and a fine bloke to have known. Rest in Peace mate."

Rifleman Kevin Spicer, 4 Platoon, B Company 3 RIFLES said:

"Holkham was a top bloke a true wide boy, always up for a laugh. But when it came down to business he was one of the best soldiers I knew and was professional; also he was one of the best Barma men out there. I would have followed him anywhere. Rest in Peace you will be truly missed and never forgotten.

Rifleman Leon Van Wyk, 4 Platoon, B Company 3 RIFLES said:

"Holkham you were a good Rifleman that was always up to the job. You'll be missed and never forgotten about."