

3rd Battalion, the Rifles

It is with sadness that the Ministry of Defence must confirm that Rifleman Luke Farmer from 3rd Battalion, the Rifles was killed in Afghanistan on 15 January 2010. He was killed as a result of an IED explosion while on patrol near Sangin, in Helmand Province.

Rifleman Farmer was born in Pontefract, West Yorkshire on 27 July 1990. He went to Minsthorpe Community College before joining the Army in 2008. He attended training at the Infantry Training Centre in Catterick from October 2008 to April 2009 before joining A Company 3 RIFLES in their pre-deployment training for Op HERRICK 11.

Lieutenant Colonel Nick Kitson, Commanding Officer 3 RIFLES BG said:

"Rifleman Luke Farmer was everything I could ask a Rifleman to be; fit, robust, capable, determined and loyal. His dedication served as an inspiration to his fellow Riflemen and his selfless commitment was an example to all.

"Rifleman Farmer is a shining example of the young men who are serving in this place for the benefit of all. His sacrifice is as humbling as his commitment is inspiring and we shall take strength from his memory.

"Our pain is no less for him being quite new to our band of brothers; indeed the loss of such blinding potential, and one so young, is a bitter pill to swallow. We lost a top quality young Rifleman, so much so that he had most definitely made his mark during the very full months he had been with us.

"The thoughts and prayers of this whole Battle Group go out to his family at this tragic time. We know that they too will find comfort in all that he had achieved and the great promise which he showed."

Major Tim Harris, Officer Commanding A Company said:

"Rifleman Luke Farmer was a typical Yorkshireman: tough as granite, quietly self-assured and as brave as ten men. He was a man who 'spoke softly but carried a big stick'. There was no front, no bluff, just honest endeavour and extraordinary maturity for one so young.

"Physically fit and dedicated he was a formidable foe in the unofficial wrestling arena and he carried this strength and courage into his work.

"It was no surprise to me that when he died he had just been fighting the enemy, and that he was the front man, clearing the route in the dark with a metal detector for his mates so that they would be safe. He saw this as his sacred duty – and he was damned good at it.

"Time and again during this tour, he found devices which were subsequently made safe, saving

countless lives and limbs. He was proud of his achievements, and I hope his family can take comfort from the fact that Luke died doing an important job, and one that he cared passionately about.

"He may have appeared to outsiders to be reserved, quiet and possibly shy. This was not the case at all. He was simply weighing you up. Once you had earned his trust you would see what a warm, engaging, funny and loyal man he was. He was utterly selfless in defending those he considered to be his mates – and there were many of those.

"A Company will miss him dearly, but we are now doubly determined to continue the work he begun, helping to bring security to the area and deny the insurgents the space to intimidate the local people. At this time, my thoughts and prayers are with his dear family, who I know were so proud of his many achievements. They are right to be proud: he was one of a kind."

Lieutenant Palmer Winstanley, Officer Commanding 2 Platoon said:

"Rifleman Luke Farmer was not your average Rifleman. He had a real depth of character. He was confident, strong, and kind. He was a quiet man with a quick wit.

"For such a young man (only 19½ years old) he was mature beyond his years. He stepped up to the mark as our lead man, responsible for finding improvised explosive devices with a metal detector. This is an incredible undertaking for anyone, and it is certain that he saved many lives, (British and Afghan) through his sheer resilience and bravery.

"He loved his job right from the start. He made an impact on everyone in the chain of command. He never 'jacked' on his fellow soldiers, and was always the first to volunteer for tasks. He was an exceptional Rifleman, who showed considerable potential for promotion within the Army even at this early stage. He was a brilliant young man with a bright future ahead of him.

"His loss is felt sorely by the whole Platoon, but his death will not go in vain. Only minutes before he died he was suppressing the enemy, refusing to budge an inch. His death has left a large hole in the Platoon that cannot be filled.

"Young, strong, brave and utterly loyal to his mates. Luke Farmer you will never be forgotten."

Corporal Ben Hall, section commander, 2 Platoon said:

"'Farms' was the 'Directing Staff' answer to a Rifleman – in other words he was exactly what every section commander would hope for. Fit, robust, bright, tough, always happy, and a legend on the lash. He was a real character in the Platoon. It was an honour to have worked with him. You'll be sorely missed mate, Ben."

Lance Corporal Kai Phillips RA, Fire Support Team said:

"Farmer was a hard working, strong and gifted soldier who was utterly professional but was also a bit of a prankster as I found out to my cost on more than one occasion. He loved his rugby and was mad keen on fitness; most of all he was a good friend to me – I will miss him so."

Rifleman Danny Coop, 2 Platoon A Company, said:

"Rifleman Farmer was one of my best mates in the whole world. He always put other people before himself. He will be missed loads by the Platoon: none of us will ever forget him. I always remember he used to make us all laugh by doing his famous 'Rocky' impression. Missing you Farmer you will be a big loss in the platoon xx"

Rifleman Sam Glasby, 2 Platoon A Company said:

"In memory of Rfn Luke Farmer. Farmer was a great lad and an awesome friend. He lived fairly close to me and we had loads in common: sports, chasing girls and nights out on the lash – what a legend. He always used to talk about home and what he was going to do when he got back.

"Farmer was known as the "Iron man Yorkshireman" because no-one could beat him at wrestling. It was so funny watching him wrestling and boxing with all the lads; he was pure morale and we all miss him so badly. I hope and pray that everyone will stay strong after this tragic loss of a brilliant young man, Luke Farmer. Rest in peace mate; love you to bits and will miss you loads."

Rifleman Jerome Cupid, 2 Platoon A Company, said:

"Luke Farmer was a friend to me, someone I could talk to if I felt a bit downhearted. To class him as a friend is not enough, he was rather like a brother to me. To start with he was a really funny guy, and was always boasting about his wrestling skills. He always spoke fondly of his Mum and Dad, and how he couldn't wait to get back home to see them. It is with tears in my eyes that I write this as I realise I will not see him again in this life, but I will always remember Luke Farmer."

Rifleman Daniel Cooper, 2 Platoon A Company, said:

"On meeting Farmer during our Pre Deployment Training I realised I had met a really easy going man with a good nature. He had broad shoulders and was able to take any pressure to do any job. Given time he would have been the Almas UFC champion – Luke was a strong man with a kind heart."

Rifleman Tom Robson, 2 Platoon A Company, said:

"When Farmer first joined us he moved straight into my room. He was a quality mate, funny, always up for a laugh, and would never jack on the lads. He settled into the Platoon straight away and quickly proved himself as an awesome Rifleman.

"Strong, fit and switched on, his loss is a tragedy but we know that he died doing a job which he loved and he was proud of what he did and what he had achieved in his short, bright career. My thoughts go out to his family and friends – we will never forget him – RIP mate."

Rifleman Eddie Foster, 2 Platoon A Company, said:

"Me and Farmer used to have a right old laugh. He was from Yorkshire I am from the south so we used to have a bit of friendly banter, and used to do north v south competitions. I remember we had a 1 on 1 basketball match in FOB NOLAY, neither of us were any good but I smashed

him 5-4!

"He used to call me a 'southern fairy'! He was a real grafter and you could tell that he just loved being a soldier. Everyone in the Platoon got on with him and we all enjoyed watching him make Kai 'tap out' in a wrestling match. He enjoyed drawing and he was very good at it too. You will be missed mate but not forgotten. My sympathy goes to your parents who we all knew you loved. Rest in peace Farmer, I'll never forget you."

Rifleman Jonnie Rowlands, 3 RIFLES BG, said:

"Luke was my best friend and I never had anybody I could get on with so well, people used to laugh in training because they used to call him Farmers, the NCOs used to insist it was Farmer, not Farmers. Whenever we went home I always used to ring him and ask him to come for a drink. He probably thought I was stalking him.

"When we passed out of training we went on holiday to Spain together before we went to Scotland to join 3 RIFLES. We were in different companies - I bet he was glad to get rid of me but we still did most things together when we were in Scotland. He was a first class soldier, he loved it and he loved to be first all the time which was in most things. You will be missed mate."

Rifleman Kevin McDelling, 1 Platoon A Company, said:

"This has been a sad day for the Company having lost a good soldier and more than that a true friend. Rifleman Farmer was always smiling and eager to help out others wherever he could.

"He used to be teased for his 'pretty boy' looks but he shoved that aside by proving he was not just a pretty boy but a pretty good soldier. The job he has done in Afghanistan will never be forgotten. My condolences to his family and friends. He leaves a big gap in all of our hearts. R.I.P. Pretty Boy."

Rifleman Justin Carter, 3 Platoon A Company, said:

"I first met Luke Farmer when we were both in training in Catterick. We were in the same Platoon and even the same section. At first he came across as reserved and quiet, but after going out on the lash (which he was good at!), and spending time with him I realised he was a right laugh.

"He was a bright, mature lad with plenty of ambition. He loved his fitness – he was even awarded the prize for best fitness in Catterick. Luke was a great soldier, an awesome Rifleman, and a brilliant friend who will truly be missed."