

6th BATTALION, THE RIFLES - 3 RIFLES BATTLE GROUP

Rifleman Mark Marshall was born in Exeter on 24 March 1980. He went to Saint Peters Church of England High School in Exeter where he gained a BTEC in Public Services before joining the Police as a Community Support Officer. Rifleman Marshall joined 6 RIFLES, a Territorial Army Battalion, in October 2007 and attended training at the Infantry Training Centre in Catterick in October 2008. He completed an Assault Pioneer Cadre prior to mobilising to serve with the 3 RIFLES BG on Op HERRICK 11 in June 2009.

Rifleman Marshall was posted to C Company 3 RIFLES with whom he completed pre-deployment training before deploying to Kajaki in Northern Helmand. He served in Kajaki for two months before his Platoon was sent to occupy a Patrol Base in the northern part of the town of Sangin. Throughout this time Rifleman Marshall was employed as the point man in his patrol, charged with the clearance of the ground of Improvised Explosive Devices.

Rifleman Marshall was killed when an IED detonated while he was on a routine patrol providing reassurance and security to the local population.

He leaves behind his mother, Lynn, his girlfriend, Hayley, and his brother and sister, Alex and Jo.

Lieutenant Colonel Nick Kitson, Commanding Officer, 3 RIFLES Battle Group said:
"Rifleman Marshall was one of the willing band of volunteers who signed up to join the Battle Group on what they knew would be a most challenging tour. From the moment he arrived with his Company he had the respect and friendship of them all. A policeman by day and talented soldier by night, he epitomised everything that is great about our Reserve Forces and the men and women who serve in them. He displayed all the characteristics that I look for in a Rifleman; courage, selflessness and humour, and for these things he was treasured by those who worked alongside him. The dedication he showed in protecting his fellow Riflemen by diligently scouring the ground for devices, all the while working towards a better future for local Afghans, gives us great cause for pride and a real source of inspiration.

"The Battle Group will feel his loss most keenly as he provided a depth and colour to our ranks that will be difficult to replace. Our grief however will be as nothing compared to those closest to him. The thoughts and prayers of the Battle Group are with his family, friends and loved ones at this most difficult of times."

Lieutenant Colonel Tim House, Commanding Officer, 6 RIFLES said:
"Rifleman Marshall joined 6 RIFLES in October 2007. Already a thoroughly rounded, mature and thoughtful man with plenty of experience of life when he joined the Army, he quickly learned the skills necessary to become a highly effective and inquisitive soldier. He was a man who was typical of the modern Territorial Army Riflemen: committed, highly professional,

intelligent and loyal. He was already showing clear leadership potential and his tour of Afghanistan would have made him a front runner in the Battalion for promotion. Indeed, his personal qualities and strength of character meant that he was always punching well above his weight and achieving far more than one would expect from our most junior ranks.

"For those of us who new him as a friend as well as a fellow Rifleman, Mark was a popular, sociable and highly regarded member of a close knit community within 6 RIFLES. He stands out as a man who was humorous, considerate of others and incredibly helpful.

"Rifleman Marshall was a great role model for younger, less experienced members of his platoon and was universally admired by us all. His death is a great loss to us all and his memory will inspire us to carry on where he left off.

"Finally, I would like to say that our thoughts and prayers are first and foremost with Mark's family and friends at this dreadful time."

Major Mike Lynch, Officer Commanding, C Company 3 RIFLES said:

"Rifleman Marshall joined C Company at the beginning of Pre-Deployment Training from our sister Battalion, 6 RIFLES. He swiftly found a home here and you would have been forgiven for thinking that he had been with us for so much longer because he fitted in so well.

"During his initial interview Mark made it clear that he had signed up for the tour for the following reasons; 'to test myself, to meet new people and to face a new challenge'. I firmly believe that he achieved all these and much more. Throughout training he never stopped asking questions, always inquisitive and never satisfied until he fully understood every lesson in detail. He was a consummate professional, intelligent, highly motivated and not afraid of dragging others forward with him. Mark was a conscientious and selfless Rifleman and one of the kindest men I have ever had the pleasure to serve with. Nothing was ever too difficult for him and he always went out of his way to help others even when tired and under pressure himself. His maturity and modest nature helped him very quickly to become a strong and popular character within 7 Platoon."

"I spoke to Mark earlier in the tour about his future plans and he made it very clear that wanted to consider pursuing a career in the Army after his recent experiences and I am in no doubt that he would have had an outstanding career. His drive marked him out as a future leader of men and he was keen to put himself forward for the forthcoming JNCO cadre which I fully supported.

"The loss of Mark has left a huge gap in a very tight knit unit and we will all miss him dearly. He had such a big impact in a short space of time and his memory will live on with us all. All our thoughts are with his family at this very difficult time."

Lance Corporal Brent Meheux said:

"Mark, or 'Marshy' as he was known to his mates, and I met when we joined the TA together in 2007. As I got to know him he told me more about himself, how he'd always wanted to join up, but had somehow got

sidetracked into working as a baker in a supermarket. After a few years he was made a department manager, but still felt unchallenged so left to join the police as a Community Support Officer. Yet still he had the nagging feeling that he had to join up and see if he had it in him to do the job, and so he joined the TA with the firm plan to go on the first tour he could. It became clear that Marshy had real strength of character. He wasn't the most athletic of people, but he never quit and always passed whatever test was put in front of him. On the coldest, wettest nights he never snapped and his humour would lift all around him.

"Straight out of Catterick, all were keen for him to go on the Junior Non-Commissioned Officers cadre, and again just before joining 3 RIFLES he was pushed to go on the course, but Marshy was adamant that it could wait until he had got an operational tour under his belt. All who worked with him were left in no doubt as to just how good an NCO he would have made.

"Before we left to join 3 RIFLES I remember 6 RIFLES putting on a welfare morning in Exeter and afterwards Marshy, his mum Lynn, sister Jo, myself and my wife spent a lazy summer afternoon sat in a local pub garden. His brother Alex couldn't make it, but from the chat and way they were together you knew how close he was to his family, and he was without a doubt the apple of his mum's eye. I know how devastated they will be by his death, but I also remember his mum saying that she always knew he'd do this, ever since he was a child he'd always wanted to join up, and how although she hated the thought of him being away they were all really proud of him for following his dreams.

"Outside of the Army Marshy had a real love for speed; from his BMW to his Superbike; anything that was fast. When last winter he got a chance to go skiing for the first time with the Army it became clear he was fearless, flying down the nearest black runs on his third day. Mind you, I think the instructor would have been happier had he learned to turn first.

"I remember how worried he was about the lads finding out that he was a copper. He made us promise not to tell anyone, but he needn't have worried as it became the worst kept secret in 3 RIFLES and as usual by the time people found out his personality and keenness to work hard had already won them over.

"I remember the last time I spoke to Marshy was the night before his R&R, just before Christmas. He spent the evening talking about his section, his mates and how much they meant to him. After a while he asked me what I thought about him staying with 3 RIFLES after the tour. I started laughing and told him that him wanting to stay with 3 RIFLES was a worse kept secret than him being a copper in civvie street, and how if I was 10 years younger I'd be joining him. As usual Marshy had a comeback - 'Godders, don't you mean 20 years younger?'

"Marshy was, in my mind, the very best that the TA can bring to the party; the wisdom of

someone a little older, the tenacity to always give it his all, the openness to always be willing to learn from all those he met and the ability to become so good at his job that no one any longer knew he was TA. The TA and the RIFLES have lost a truly gifted man, and I have lost a true friend that I will never forget.

"A few months from now, when I've left 3 RIFLES, I'll be propping up a bar in Exeter TA Centre and some young recruit is bound to ask me how 'Marshy' died, I'll smile, raise my glass and tell him; He died how he lived, my son, as a RIFLEMAN, SWIFT AND BOLD."

Captain Ben Shuttleworth, Second in Command, A Company, 4 RIFLES, said:
"Rifleman Marshall was a deeply popular character within 7 Platoon. As is so often the case with Territorial Army soldiers, with his arrival came a fresh perspective and zest for soldiering that infected his brother Riflemen in the Platoon. For many Marshy became an instant surrogate big brother, a good listener but also a fountain of advice. He volunteered and took pride in being one of the lead members of his section, taking on the burden of the enormous and dangerous responsibility of trying to find improvised explosive devices at the front of the patrol. All members of the Company now mourn an inspirational Rifleman."

Lieutenant Rob Fellows, Officer Commanding, 7 Platoon, said:
"Rifleman Mark Marshall was a highly intelligent, brave and determined soldier who could be relied upon to rise to any challenge with a smile on his face. It was typical of his stoic approach that he took to keeping his colleagues safe by clearing IEDs. This is one of the most dangerous, and most important, jobs in a rifle platoon. This was typical of his selfless commitment and bravery.

"Rifleman Marshall had recently assumed the additional responsibility of Platoon Intelligence Representative. He showed a natural flair for analysing the 'human terrain' of the local area and used his policeman's eye for detail to good effect. I have no doubt that through both his sharp eye and steady hand he helped to keep the Platoon and the locals safe.

"Rifleman Marshall was a popular member of the platoon, with a natural maturity which made him easy to get on with regardless of rank. He had been considering joining the regular army permanently and he would have been a great asset to the Battalion, with a promising future. He had an equally bright future ahead of him with 6 RIFLES and the Police. He will be sorely missed by everyone in 7 Platoon. However our grief is as nothing compared to that of his family, in particular his mother Lynn and girlfriend Hayley. Mark was devoted to both of them and wrote a constant stream of letters home. Our thoughts are with them at this difficult time."

Serjeant Billy Bain, 7 Platoon Serjeant, said:
"I first saw Rifleman Mark Marshall at a farm complex at Lydd where we were conducting Pre-Deployment Training. My first impression was of a posh, slightly overweight Rifleman who

was a bit old. Well, they say never judge a book by its cover. This was certainly true in his case as he could hold his own on a run, his military knowledge for a TA lad was second to none; the one thing he could do nothing about was his age and he kept saying 'I'm getting old'! He definitely added to the platoon from the very start, becoming a father figure to the younger lads, and was always about for advice. He was never a man to shy away from things when they needed doing and he was a man you could rely on. He became a massive character within the Platoon and he will be truly missed and will remain in our hearts. My thoughts and prayers go out to his family and girlfriend who he leaves behind."

Corporal James Down, Section Commander in 7 Platoon, said:

"Mark Marshall, or Eminem as his civvy mates knew him, joined 7 Platoon during the funny farm at Lydd. He was so well spoken, he should have come from Sandhurst. Mature and educated, he was definitely the granddad of the platoon, and he would always be around to offer advice to the lads when needed, doing everything for others, expecting nothing in return. Marshy, you were the most selfless bloke I have ever known. I know I always wanted you on patrol with me. I felt safe. I'm sorry I made you come along on every patrol we did. For the little time I've known you, I've known you so long. I'll miss the hours we passed away talking about home, holidays and motors. You were to me an older brother I never had. I know you'll be up in heaven telling the other lads interesting facts. My thoughts are with your family and girlfriend, you talked about them non-stop. We all miss you so much mate, there is so much I want to write. We will see you when we get home. Goodbye Marshy I'm never going to forget you, sleep tight."

Corporal Donna Gent, 7 Platoon, A Company, 4 RIFLES, 3 RIFLES BG

"Marshy was a true gent; the way I found this out was by being stuck up some ladders in the sentry post due to my fear of heights. He was my stag partner. Once I let him know, he came to my aid without laughter and talked me down. Then he had to endure the ladder on my behalf for the rest of the stags without complaint. When our tasks involved ladders Marshy was there for me calming as ever. When I come to ladders without you I shall try and show no fear like you always demonstrated to us. RIP Marshy, you've left a big imprint on 7 Platoon's hearts. My thoughts and prayers are with your family."

Lance Corporal David Nicol, Section Second in Command, 7 Platoon, said:

"Rifleman Marshall was a very smart and professional Rifleman, always there when you needed him to have a chat, no matter how minor it was. Mark never had any dramas with doing what you told him, he would just get down to it. He had a very good sense of humour and wasn't scared to speak his mind. I will miss him dearly and it's a great loss. Mark and his family will be in our thoughts. RIP mate."

Lance Corporal Stefan Rees, 7 Platoon, said:

"When Marshy joined us on Pre-Deployment Training, it was obvious he was going to be a

popular character amongst the platoon. Never short of a joke or a laugh, he quickly became the granddad of the blokes as Marshy never hesitated and took everything in his stride. An excellent Rifleman but a better friend. RIP Marshy."

Rifleman Jonathan Rowlands, 7 Platoon, said:

"Rifleman Marshall was a good friend to me he would always cheer you up if you were feeling down. Marshy was always good for morale and we got to realise how professional he was about his job after a couple of months. My thoughts go out to his family and friend. The platoon is going to miss him dearly. RIP mate you're going to be missed."

Rifleman Antonio Couch, 7 Platoon, said:

"Marshy was the daddy of the platoon. His maturity and knowledge combined with enthusiasm and camaraderie made him an exceptional squaddie to work with and I believe an outstanding friend. His character made him unique and approachable. He always had a thing with keeping me on stag on handover even though I wanted to sleep; being on stag with him was always entertaining. He always told stories about his experiences as a policeman and it always ended in laughter, he kept going on about Pre-Deployment Training being extended, he was looking forward to that. Having met Mark I can say with pleasure that he was a hero. In fact, that is an understatement: in my eyes he is a legend and will not be forgotten by me or our platoon. May he rest in peace now and always. Mrs Marshall, you can always be proud of your son."

Rifleman Christopher Lue, 7 Platoon, said:

"A good mate, I always enjoyed his little education talks. He was my morale, always putting a smile on my face when we are on stag and in the room. He was the bread maker whenever we got off stag. He would always have bread for breakfast. I will miss you Marshy, we will remember you. Swift and Bold!"

Rifleman Jim Hills, 7 Platoon, said:

"Rifleman Marshall (Marshy) was a true friend to us all, even though we didn't know him for long it felt like we knew him forever. He was a proper Devon boy through and through, he brought his professionalism from the police force to the army and we all admired him for coming out with us as one of the boys, he will be greatly missed by all. Rest in peace brother."

Rifleman Roy Patterson, 7 Platoon, said:

"Rifleman Marshall, one of the boys. He was always morale, part of the team. Always chatting about random stuff on stag, never a dull moment. He'll be missed massively by me and everyone else. RIP Mate."

Rifleman Josh Smith, 7 Platoon, said:

"My first memory of Mark was when he first moved into my room and was shocked at the mess there was. Mark was quiet at first but it didn't take long for him to show his real self. I realised how mature and knowledgeable Mark was, he possessed a gift that enabled you to speak to him about any

problems you had and give you advice on how to deal with them. As well as his mature nature he possessed a wicked sense of humour; he was always telling stories about funny nights out and was always a good laugh to go on the town with. Overall Mark was a true Rifleman who did everything to a high standard, he was a loyal friend that would go out of his way to help you out. RIP Marshy - you will not be forgotten."

Rifleman James Jackson, 7 Platoon, said:

"Rifleman Marshall (Marshy) who joined us on Pre-Deployment Training was taken in by the Platoon straight away. He turned out to be a soldier who was full of knowledge and professionalism, not to mention a great sense of humour. He will be surely missed by the platoon and me. Rest in peace Marshy, God Bless."

Rifleman Aaron Barry, 7 Platoon, said:

"I met Marshy at the start of Pre-Deployment Training. After working alongside him for a few days I knew he was a true professional and loved his work. Even if it was just part time, he was a true squaddie at heart. When we got back to Edinburgh he was put in the bed space next to me. I will never forget the endless nights we sat talking about anything and everything. When I found out that he was going to be in the same section as me, I was glad to be working alongside such a gleaming bloke. I remember him coming to relieve me from stag at six in the morning and I would still be on the position come half past six or quarter to seven. We would just get lost in conversation. Marshy, you were a top bloke you will be sadly missed and never forgotten. My thoughts go out to your friends and family, sleep tight mate there is a star in the sky for you."

Corporal James Morgan, 6 RIFLES, said:

"I first met Rifleman Mark Marshall last June, when a number of us Territorial soldiers formed up at RTMC Chilwell to embark on pre-deployment training for Herrick 11. I understand that he had already impressed in a number of ways on his training prior to that, and that he showed all the signs of a promising Rifleman.

"Young and fresh faced, one couldn't help but warm to his engaging personality. Indeed, that time at Chilwell was one of the most enjoyable of my career to date and it was people like Marshy that made it so.

"He was based in Exeter, and will be sorely missed by the lads down at Wyvern Barracks. He worked as a Police Community Support Officer at home, which was often the subject of some good humoured banter which he always took well.

"I know he believed passionately in what he did, and will always remember when, whilst we were heading out for a pint or two one evening, he taught some youngsters the error of their ways. That epitomized him

to me - keen to make a difference when others might have walked on by. He brought exactly those sorts of qualities to his soldiering. Good for morale, and selfless in his support of others, you knew you could always count on him to be where he needed to be, ready for the job in hand. As on the streets back home, he was keen to come to Afghanistan and to try to make a difference here as well. Rifleman Marshall was all you could ask for in a West Country soldier. His loss will be felt keenly by both 3 and 6 Rifles, his family, his girlfriend, and his many other friends. May he rest in peace."